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M.Gillies. W.H.Egleton.

Mary Howitt

BALLADS

AND

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ac

OTHER POEMS.

BY MARY HOWITT.

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TO

WILLIAM HOWITT,

MY BEST COUNSELLER AND TEACHER;

MY LITERARY ASSOCIATE FOR A QUARTER OF A CENTURY;

MY HUSBAND, AND MY FRIEND;

THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

It is perhaps needless to say, that I have been all my life a passionate admirer of ballad-poetry. Brought up, as a child, in a picturesque, old-fashioned part of England, remote from books and from the world, and under circumstances of almost conventual seclusion, the echoes of this old, traditional literature found their way to my ear and my heart. Few books, excepting those of a religious and somewhat mystical character, reached me; but an old domestic, with every requisite for a German *Märchen-Frau*, who had a memory stored with ballads, old songs, and legends, inflamed my youthful imagination by her wild chaunts and recitations, and caused it to take very early flights into the regions of romance.

When I married, under circumstances the most favourable for a young poetical spirit, the world of

literature was at once opened before me; and to mark the still prevailing character of my taste, I may say that the first book I read, when I had my free choice in a large library, was Percy's Relics of Ancient English Poetry, of which I had heard, but till then had never seen. The first fifteen years of my married life were devoted to poetry. My husband and I published two joint volumes of poems within the first few years of our marriage; and then, giving freer vent to my own peculiar fancies, I again took to writing ballads, which were published in various periodicals of the day, and the favourable reception they met with gave me the utmost encouragement. The happiest period, however, of my literary life was when, gladdened by the praise of the public, and encouraged by my husband, on whose taste and judgment I had the greatest dependence, I resolved to put forth my whole strength into one effort, which should afford me free scope for working out character, and for dramatic effect, at which I had always aimed, even in the simplest ballad. My hopes were high, and I thought to achieve a name among the poets of

my country. I accordingly wrote the "Seven Temptations" — a poem faulty in many respects, and different to what I would now do, but with which at that time I spared no pains. Authors will therefore understand my feelings when I say that the first review I read of this work was so unfavourable, and that without giving a single quotation in proof of its opinion, that I was cut to the heart. I never experienced a sensation like that before, and I pray that I never may again. The book, however, had its share of praise, and made me many dear and valuable friends. But from that day I tremble at the name of critic, and feel a peculiar sensation of heart when public judgment is about to be passed upon me. I have somewhat of this feeling at this moment, because, although the critics have praised my ballads, and many of them have called upon me to give them to the public in a collected form, still, I myself am not precisely the same person that I was ten or fifteen years ago, when the greater number were written. Life teaches many lessons in that time; the tastes and the feelings become matured, or perhaps greatly changed; and I, also, now require in poetry,

to say nothing of its subject, a degree of polish and finish which in my younger years I cared little about. My next volume of poetry must be different in many respects from any thing which I have yet done, though it must still retain that love of Christ, of the poor, and of little children, which always was and will be a ruling sentiment of my soul.

This is an egotistical preface, but I trust I shall be pardoned. And in conclusion, dear reader, while you receive in many of these poems a faithful transcript of myself ten or fifteen years ago, the volume will be found to contain also portions of my later self, in which I hope there are some breathings of that philosophy of life which is true religion — that spirit of love which knows a sympathy and fellowship with all who suffer as well as with all who rejoice.

MARY HOWITT.

The Elms, Clapton, Dec. 1. 1846.

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BALLADS.

BALLADS.

THE LADY MAGDALENE.

A Legend of an English Hall.

PART I.

In a large old house dwells Magdalene,
And with her there are three:
A blithe old man the gardener;
And good Dame Margery;

And a priest, who cometh now and then,
With a high and shaven crown,
With a foot that treads so silently,
And a long black camlet gown.

All up and down the galleries
Went the Lady Magdalene,
A-looking at the pictures old,
That on the walls were seen.

"And who is this, Dame Margery,
With the gold chain and the sword?"
"That was thy father, Magdalene;
He was a noble lord!"

"And who is this boy, Dame Margery,
With the greyhound at his side?"
"That was thy brother, Magdalene;
At four years old he died!"

"And tell me, I pr'ythee, Margery,
Who's this with the downcast eye?
It troubles my heart, Dame Margery,
And yet I know not why."

No answer at all made Margery,
For a little season's space;

And again the maiden, Magdalene,
Looked up into her face.

"There are chambers many," quoth Magdalene,
"And many a stately bed;
And many a room so beautiful,
All green, and gold, and red.

"How is it, I pray, Dame Margery,
That all alone I dwell?
I have asked the question of myself,
And I'm sure I cannot tell.

"In the village street, Dame Margery,
Even in winter weather,
I see the children, sevens and eights,
All playing there together:

"But in this large and grand old house,
I pray, how may it be,
That I am thus alone, alone,
With none for company?

" I look into the distant fields,
On the terrace as I stand,
And see the mothers walking there,
And children hand in hand.

" And now, I pray, Dame Margery,
This mystery make clear;
What spell is it, so sad yet sweet,
That ever draws me here?

" The face is very fair to see,
And so is many another;
But the spell is like the yearning love
Which bindeth child and mother."

Sore troubled was Dame Margery,
The tears were in her eye,
And she wiped them with her withered hand,
As thus she made reply.

" Yes, she was fair, sweet Magdalene,
Like an angel fair and mild!

And she *was* thy mother, Magdalene;
I nursed her as a child.

" Ah me! I can remember well
Those times for ever fled,
When there were children and friends enow
To sleep in every bed.

" When the hall table was too small
For those who sate to meat;
And serving-men went to and fro
With rapid, noiseless feet.

" There were thirty horses then in stall,
And grooms nigh half a score;
Even I was gay and handsome then —
But all those times are o'er!

" The house, in troth, is silent now,
And hath a look of gloom;
I can remember dance and song
And lights in every room!

" The jackdaws now, and swallows, build
In the chimneys cold and tall;
The ivy creeps o'er the window-glass,
And green damps on the wall.

" I can remember, Magdalene,
When the trees, that grow so wild
Along the shrubbery paths, were set;
Thy mother was then a child.

" He thinks, old John the gardener,
Those times may come again;
Mayhap they will, sweet Magdalene,—
But ah! I know not when!"

PART II.

On the terrace broad walked Magdalene,
With gentle steps and slow;
And blithe old John the gardener
Was working down below.

And he sang, the blithe old gardener—
" The bird upon the tree
Is merry in budding spring-time,
And I'm as merry as he."

He cut the leaves of the snowdrop down,
And tied up the daffodilly;
And then he sang, as he bent to work,
With a " Heigho! willy, nilly!"

Down the broad stone steps went Magdalene,
And stood by the old flower-bed:
Still at his work the old man bent,
Nor once raised up his head.

" 'Tis a lonesome place!" said Magdalene,
" A lonesome dreary place!"
The blithe old man he ceased his work,
And gazed into her face.

" Ay, lone enough, my lady fair!"
Said the cheerful gardener;

" But I can remember yon terrace steps
With children all astir.

" There was my Lady Isabel,
With hair like the raven's wing;
And the second sister, Adeline,
A wilful, proud young thing.

" There was Lord Francis, and Lady Jane,
And your blessed lady-mother;
Two younger brothers besides, and he
That was dearer than a brother.

" He was your father afterwards —
Good lack! how time moves on! —
There were seven children then i' th' house,
And now there is but one!
And all those happy children,
Like flowers of spring, are gone!

" What troops of ladies I have seen
Go walking up and down,

Each softly fanning of herself,
In a shining silken gown!

"What gay and gallant gentlemen,
All clad in velvet fine;
What riding in and out there was;
What drinking of the wine!

"Ay, sure enough, the place is still—
Stiller than it was then;
But perchance, my Lady Magdalene,
It may be blithe again!"

With that he stooped down to his work,
And harder worked than ever,
Nodding his head to his favourite song,
"Let care drown in the river!"

And as he sang he cleared the leaves
From the crocus, matted and wan;
The Lady Magdalene walked away,
But he kept singing on.

PART III.

In a stately room, at eventide,
The old priest sate and read
In an old and large black-letter book,
O'er which he bent his head.

In a painted oriel window stood
Beside him Magdalene,
And o'er her streamed the sunset light,
Rose-tinted, gold, and green.

"Put down thy books," said Magdalene,
"Thou must not read to-day;
Put down thy books, good father,
And hearken what I say!"

Roused by her words, the grave old man
His eyelids slowly raised,
And silently at Magdalene
In calm surprise he gazed.

"Now, father good," said Magdalene,
"This hour, I pray thee, tell,
Why in this grand old house, alone,
Year after year I dwell.

"Thou hast taught me both to read and write,
Hast taught me all I know,
Yet kept me from my kind apart,
I pray, why is it so?

"Why? when the lore which thou hast taught
Is love in each degree,
From God down to the meanest thing
Of his great family?

"Father, I've seen the children poor,
Glad sisters with their brothers;
Have seen the joy within the heart
Of lowly village mothers;

"Have seen, upon the Sabbath morn,
How many a loving band

Of Christian people churchward go,
And children hand in hand.

"Have seen them kneeling, side by side,
Each to the other known,
Like groups of saints together set,
But I kneel all alone!

"Oh, 't is a pleasant sight to me!
And yet my heart doth ache,
To see such holy happiness
Which I cannot partake!

"Why is it thus? I pray thee tell
Why none with me abide.
Oh, for a loving sister
To worship at my side!

"Father, I scarce know who I am,
Save that my line is great,
And that some heavy household woe
Hath made me desolate.

" Thou art a righteous man and wise,
Thy teachings I revere;
But why I dwell in solitude,
I pray thee, let me hear!"

For a moment's space the grave old man
No answer made at all;
The tears were in his mild grey eyes,
Yet he no tear let fall.

" Hearken to me, my Magdalene,"
At length he calmly spake;
" Thou hast been nurtured in this wise
For thy well-being's sake.

" I can remember when this house
Was full of sons and daughters,
When its fortunes all seemed flourishing,
As willows by the waters.

" Daughters and sons, I mind me well
What a noble band was there;

The sons all goodly men of might,
The daughters wondrous fair.

"I can recall this solitude
An ever-changing crowd,
And the silence of these chambers vast
Was riot long and loud.

"I will not tell thee, Magdalene,
Of heartlessness and crime;
Enough, the wrath of Heaven hath scourged
The evil of that time.

"There was a blight upon the race,
They one by one did fall;
Sorrow and sin had stricken them,
And death consumed them all.

"There was but one of all her house
Whom folly did not win,
An angel in a woman's form,
Thy mother, Magdalene!

" And when upon her bed of death
In her bright youth she lay,
An angel to her native skies
About to pass away,

" She made me promise solemnly,
Before our imaged Lord,
That thou, my precious Magdalene,
Shouldst be my sacred ward.

" She gave me rules to guide my will,
Prescribed a course whereby
Thy heart should be enlarged by love,
Thy mind have purpose high.

" 'Thou know'st the follies of this house,'
Said she, 'its woe, its pride;
And through these errors of the past
Let her be sanctified!'

" She died! the place was desolate,
Her kindred all were gone,

There was but I, her ghostly friend,
And thou, her orphaned one!

"Their thriftless lives had made thee poor,
Their shame thy name had shent,
Sorely run out were all thy lands,
And mortgaged all thy rent.

"I trained thee in this sober wise,
And in this solitude,
That thou mightst grow up innocent,
Sedate, and wise, and good.

"Thy manors now lie far and wide,
Thy noble lands are free,
And young and old, my Magdalene,
Are looking up to thee.

"Ere long thou wilt have friends enow,
And, so Heaven give thee grace,
The sounds of joy may ring again
From this deserted place.

" It has been stripped and desolate,
Its want laid open wide,
But a youthful spirit's innocence
The place hath purified!

" Be patient yet, my Magdalene,
Please God the time draws near,
When blameless mirth and many friends
Shall gather round thee here!"

1835.

TIBBIE INGLIS;

OR,

THE SCHOLAR'S WOOING.

Bonny Tibbie Inglis!
Through sun and stormy weather,
She kept upon the broomy hills
Her father's flock together.

Sixteen summers had she seen,
A rose-bud just unsealing,
Without sorrow, without fear,
In her mountain shieling.

She was made for happy thoughts,
For playful wit and laughter,

Singing on the hills alone,
With echo singing after.

She had hair as deeply black
As the cloud of thunder;
She had brows so beautiful,
And dark eyes flashing under.

Bright and witty shepherd girl!
Beside a mountain water
I found her, whom a king himself
Would proudly call his daughter.

She was sitting 'mong the crags,
Wild and mossed and hoary,
Reading in an ancient book
Some old martyr story.

Tears were starting to her eyes,
Solemn thought was o'er her;
When she saw in that lone place
A stranger stand before her.

Crimson was her sunny cheek,
And her lips seemed moving
With the beatings of her heart—
How could I help loving!

On a crag I sat me down,
Upon the mountain hoary,
And made her read again to me
That old pathetic story.

Then she sang me mountain songs,
Till the air was ringing
With her clear and warbling voice,
Like a sky-lark singing.

And when eve came on at length,
Among the blooming heather,
We herded on the mountain side
Her father's flock together.

And near unto her father's house
I said "Good night" with sorrow,

And inly wished that I might say,
"We'll meet again to-morrow!"

I watched her tripping to her home;
I saw her meet her mother;
"Among a thousand maids," I cried,
"There is not such another!"

I wandered to my scholar's home,
It lonesome looked and dreary;
I took my books but could not read,
Methought that I was weary.

I laid me down upon my bed,
My heart with sadness laden;
I dreamed but of the mountain wild,
And of the mountain maiden.

I saw her of her ancient book
The pages turning slowly;
I saw her lovely crimson cheek,
And dark eye drooping lowly.

The dream was, like the day's delight,
A life of pain's o'erpayment.
I rose, and with unwonted care
Put on my sabbath-raiment.

To none I told my secret thoughts,
Not even to my mother,
Nor to the friend who, from my youth,
Was dear as is a brother.

I got me to the hills again,
The little flock was feeding,
And there young Tibbie Inglis sate,
But not the old book reading.

She sate, as if absorbing thought
With heavy spells had bound her,
As silent as the mossy crags
Upon the mountains round her.

I thought not of my sabbath dress;
I thought not of my learning;

I thought but of the gentle maid,
Who, I believed, was mourning.

Bonny Tibbie Inglis!
How her beauty brightened,
Looking at me, half-abashed,
With eyes that flashed and lightened!

There was no sorrow then I saw,
There was no thought of sadness.
Oh life! what after-joy hast thou
Like love's first certain gladness!

I sate me down among the crags,
Upon the mountain hoary;
But read not then the ancient book, —
Love was our pleasant story.

And then she sang me songs again,
Old songs of love and sorrow,
For our sufficient happiness
Great charm from woe could borrow.

And many hours we talked in joy,
Yet too much blessed for laughter:
I was a happy man that day,
And happy ever after!

1834.

ELIAN GRAY.

"Oh! Elian Gray, rise up, rise up!"
His neighbours cried. "Still dost thou sleep?
The bloody Indians are come down,
Flames rise from the near English town;
And hark! — the war-whoop, wild and deep!"

"I sleep not," said the ancient man.
"Fly you; but tarry not for me!
I dare not quit this lonely ground,
Though the wild Indians camp around,
For God commands me not to flee.

"I know not what may be his will;
But, when I rose up to depart, —
'Fly not, thou hast no cause to fear,
Thy place of duty still is here,' —
Like lightning-words passed through my heart.

" Therefore I dare not quit this place:
But you, whom no commands delay,
Haste and secure by timely flight
Your wives and little ones this night;
Fly, fly, my children! while you may."

They fled like wild deer through the woods;
And saw, from each commanding height,
Afar, and all around, aspire
The red flames of consuming fire,
Marking the Indians' course that night.

Alone, alone sat Elian Gray,
With unbarred door, beside his fire,
Thoughtful, yet cheerfully resigned,
Awaiting with submissive mind
What the Great Master might require.

Seven days went on, and where is he?
A captive travel-worn, and spent
With weary marchings, night and day,
Through the far wilderness, away
To a wild Indian settlement.

And now the old man's strength had failed;
And, powerless as a child new-born,
Stretched in that lonely forest-place,
Among a fierce and savage race
He lay, as if of God forlorn!

Forlorn! And yet he prayed to live,
With a wild feverish agony;
And fearful, doubting, grew his mind;
And for a moment he repined
That God had brought him there to die.

When, lowly murmured by the door
Of the rude wigwam where he lay,
He heard, as if in dreams he heard,
Mournfully many an English word
Cast to the desert winds away.

He looked: it was an Indian woman
Singing, as if to soothe some woe
Which at her very heart was strong,
The sad words of an English song
That he remembered long ago, —

The ballad of a broken heart;
But how could *her* soul understand
The sadness of that story old?
How could an Indian tongue unfold
The language of another land?

Ere long the mystery was revealed;
And then the old man, Elian Gray,
Saw the great work of mercy clear,
And this was the poor stricken deer
For whom his path through peril lay.

"No, I am not of Indian birth!"
Said she: "I have an English name,
Though now none give it unto me;
Mahontis, 'child of misery,'
They gave me for my Indian name,
And 't is the only one I claim.

"And yet I love the English tongue;
And let us two our converse hold

In that dear unforgotten speech,
For it hath words my griefs to reach;—
The Indian tongue is harsh and cold.

"No, I am not of Indian blood,
My native home is far from here,
Nor is there on the face of earth
A fairer spot than gave me birth,
The English vale of Windermere.

"Oh, pleasant vale of Windermere!
There was my birthplace; there I grew,
Without a care my youth to dim,
A mountain maiden strong of limb,
And free as the wild winds that blew.

"My step was firm, my heart was bold,
I crossed the lake, I clomb the rock;
Clad in that simple country's dress,
I was a mountain shepherdess,
And there I kept my father's flock.

" I grew, and I became a wife;
And he who was my chosen mate,
Though midst our lonely mountains bred,
Much knowledge had, and much had read,
Too much for one of his estate.

" He knew all lands, all histories old;
He understood whate'er he saw;
His words poured out like waters free;
His was that native dignity
Which could respect from all men draw.

" Wise as he was, he could not toil,
And all went wrong about our place:
The years were wet; we had nought to reap;
Amid the snows we lost our sheep,
And misery stared us in the face.

" We left the land that gave us birth;
And I, who was become a mother,
Within my inmost heart kept deep
My burning tears, I did not weep;
'Tis hard our bitterest griefs to smother!

" My parents' graves among the hills,
We left them in their silence lying!
My husband's hopes were high and strong,
And with light heart he went along,
Good omens in each thing descrying.

" My heart was heavy as a stone,
And the poor children's weary cry
Fevered me till my brain grew wild;
And then I wept ev'n as a child,
And tears relieved my misery.

" We came into this foreign land.
Oh! weary is the stranger's fate!
He comes where none his feelings share,
Where he may die and no one care!
This, this is to be desolate!

" He died — ay, in the city street, —
God knows why such great grief was sent!
He died — and as the brute might die —
The careless people passed us by;

They were so used to misery,
Their meanest sympathies were spent!

"Ah me! I by his body sate,
Stupid, as if I could not break
The bonds of that affliction's thrall;
Nor had I roused my soul at all,
But for my little children's sake.

"Want, total want of daily bread
Came next. My native pride was strong;
And yet I begged from day to day,
And made my miserable way
Throughout the city's busy throng.

"I felt that I was one debased,
And what I was I dared not think;
Ev'n from myself I strove to hide
My very name; an honest pride
Made me from common beggary shrink.

"Oh misery! My homeless heart
Grew sick of life. I wandered out

With my two children, far away
Into the solitudes that lay
The populous city round about.

" The mother in my soul was strong,
And I was ravenous as the beast;
Man's heart was hard, I stole them bread,
And while I pined the children fed,
And yet each day our wants increased.

" I saw them waste, and waste away,
I strove to think it was not so:
At length one died — of want he died;
My very brain seemed petrified;
I wept not in that bitter woe!

" I took the other in my arms,
And day by day, like one amazed
By an unutterable grief,
I wandered on: I found relief
In travel, but my brain was crazed.

" How we were fed I cannot tell;
I pulled the berry from the tree,
And we lived on: I knew no pain,
Save a dull stupor in my brain,
And I forgot my misery.

" I joyed to see the little stars;
I joyed to see the midnight moon;
I felt at times a wild delight,
I saw my child before my sight
As gamesome as the young racoon.

" 'Twas a strange season; and how long
It lasted, whether days or years,
I know not: it too soon went by;
I woke again to agony,
But ne'er again to human tears.

" The Indian found me in the wood,
He took me to his forest-home;
They laid my child beneath the tree,
They buried it, unknown to me,
In a wild lonesome place of gloom.

" The Indian women on me gazed
With eyes of tenderness, and then
Slowly came back each 'wildered sense;
Their low tones of benevolence
Gave me my human soul again.

" And I have lived with them for years;
And I have been an Indian wife;
And, save at times when thoughts will flow
Back through those dreadful times of woe
To my youth's sunshine long ago,
I almost like the Indian life.

" But one cloud darkeneth still my soul,
I have forgot my fathers' God!
I cannot pray; and yet I turn
Toward Him, and my weak soul doth yearn
Once more for holy spiritual food.

" Oh that I had an inward peace!
Oh that I had a hope to bless!
A faith to strengthen, and sustain

My spirit through its mortal pain,
To comfort my long wretchedness!

"But I am feeble as a child,
I pine as one that wanteth bread;
And idly I repeat each word
Of holy import I have heard,
Or that in early creeds I said.

"But oh! my comfort cometh not!
And, whether God is veiled in wrath
And will not heed my misery,
Or whether He regardeth me,
I know not; gloomy is my path!"

With this arose old Elian Gray:
"My daughter, God hath left thee not!
He hath regarded thy complaint,
Hath seen thy spirit bruised and faint,
Thou art not of His love forgot!

"'Tis by His arm I hither came;
Surely for this I heard a voice

Which bade me in my place 'be still;'
I came by His almighty will,
And greatly doth my soul rejoice!"

He gave her comfort, gave her peace;
And that lone daughter of despair
For very joy of heart shed tears;
And the dark agony of years
Passed by, like a wild dream of care.

Thus was the old man's mission done;
And she, who 'mong that forest race
Was wife and mother, won his life
From torture, from the scalping-knife,
And sped him to his former place.

1839.

THE SALE OF THE PET LAMB.

Oh! poverty is a weary thing, 'tis full of grief and pain;
It boweth down the heart of man, and dulls his cunning brain;
It maketh even the little child with heavy sighs complain.

The children of the rich man have not their bread to win;
They scarcely know how labour is the penalty of sin;
Even as the lilies of the field, they neither toil nor spin.

And year by year, as life wears on, no wants have they to bear;
In all the luxury of the earth they have abundant share;
They walk along life's pleasant ways, where all is rich and fair.

The children of the poor man, though they be young each one,
Must rise betime each morning, before the rising sun;
And scarcely when the sun is set their daily task is done.

Few things have they to call their own, to fill their hearts with pride,
The sunshine and the summer flowers upon the highway side,
And their own free companionship on heathy commons wide.

Hunger, and cold, and weariness, these are a frightful three;
But another curse there is beside, that darkens poverty,
It may not have one thing to love, how small soe'er it be.

A thousand flocks were on the hills, a thousand flocks and more,
Feeding in sunshine pleasantly; they were the rich man's store:
There was the while one little lamb beside a cottage door;

A little lamb that rested with the children 'neath the tree,
That ate, meek creature, from their hands, and nestled to their knee;
That had a place within their hearts, one of the family.

But want, even as an armëd man, came down upon their shed,
The father laboured all day long that his children might be fed,
And, one by one, their household things were sold to buy them bread.

That father, with a downcast eye, upon his threshold stood,
Gaunt poverty each pleasant thought had in his heart subdued.
"What is the creature's life to us?" said he: "'twill buy us food.

"Ay, though the children weep all day, and with down-drooping head
Each does his small task mournfully, the hungry must be fed;
And that which has a price to bring must go to buy us bread."

It went. Oh! parting has a pang the hardest heart to wring,
But the tender soul of a little child with fervent love doth cling,
With love that hath no feignings false, unto each gentle thing.

Therefore most sorrowful it was those children small to see,
Most sorrowful to hear them plead for the lamb so piteously:
"Oh! mother dear, it loveth us; and what beside have we?"

"Let's take him to the broad green hill!" in his impotent despair
Said one strong boy: "let's take him off, the hills are wide and fair;
I know a little hiding-place, and we will keep him there."

Oh vain! They took the little lamb, and straightway tied him down,

With a strong cord they tied him fast; and o'er the common brown,
And o'er the hot and flinty roads, they took him to the town.

The little children through that day, and throughout all the morrow,
From every thing about the house a mournful thought did borrow;
The very bread they had to eat was food unto their sorrow.

Oh! poverty is a weary thing, 'tis full of grief and pain;
It keepeth down the soul of man, as with an iron chain;
It maketh even the little child with heavy sighs complain.

1830.

AN OLD MAN'S STORY.

THERE was an old and quiet man,
And by the fire sate he;
"And now," he said, "to you I'll tell
A dismal thing, which once befell
Upon the Southern Sea.

"'T is five and fifty years gone by,
Since, from the river Plate,
A young man, in a home-bound ship,
I sailed as second mate.

"She was a trim stout-timbered ship,
And built for stormy seas;
A lovely thing on the wave was she,
With her canvass set so gallantly
Before a steady breeze.

" For forty days, like a wingëd thing,
She went before the gale;
Nor all that time we slackened speed,
Turned helm, or shifted sail.

" She was a laden argosy,
With gold from the Spanish Main,
And the treasure-hoards of a Portuguese
Returning home again.

" An old and silent man was he,
His face was yellow and lean;
In the golden lands of Mexico
A miner he had been.

" His body was wasted, bent, and bowed,
And 'mid his gold he lay,
'Mid iron chests bound round with brass,
And he watched them night and day.

" No word he spoke to any on board,
His step was heavy and slow;

And all men deemed that an evil life
He had led in Mexico.

" But list ye me! On the lone high seas
As we went smoothly on,
It chanced, in the silent second watch,
As I sate on the deck alone,
That I heard from 'mong those iron chests
A sound like a dying groan.

" I started to my feet, and lo!
The captain stood by me;
He bore a body in his arms,
And dropped it in the sea.

" I heard it drop into the sea,
With a heavy splashing sound;
I saw the captain's bloody hands
As quickly he turned round.
He drew in his breath when me he saw,
Like one whom the sudden withering awe
Of a spectre doth astound:

" But I saw his white and palsied lips,
And the stare of his wild eye,
As he turned in hurried haste away,
Yet had no power to fly;
He was chained to the deck by his heavy guilt,
And the blood that was not dry.

" ' 'T was a cursëd thing,' said I, ' to kill
That old man in his sleep.
The curse of blood will come from him
Ten thousand fathoms deep.

" ' The plagues of the sea will follow us,
For Heaven his groans hath heard.'
The captain's white lips slowly moved,
And yet he spoke no word.

" And slowly he lifted his bloody hands,
As if his eyes to shade;
But the blood that was wet did freeze his soul,
And he shrieked like one afraid.

" And even then, that very hour,
The wind dropped; and a spell
Was on the ship, was on the sea;
And we lay for weeks, how wearily!
Where the old man's body fell.

" I told no one within the ship
That horrid deed of sin;
For I saw the hand of God at work,
And punishment begin.

" And, when they spoke of the murdered man
And the El-Dorado hoard,
They all surmised he had walked in dreams,
And fallen overboard.

" But I alone, and the murderer,
That dreadful thing did know,
How he lay in his sin, a murdered man,
A thousand fathoms low.

" And many days, and many more,
Came on, and lagging sped;

And the heavy waves of the sleeping sea
Were dark, like molten lead.

" But not a breeze came east or west,
And burning was the sky,
And stifling was each breath we drew ;
The air was hot and dry.

" Oh me ! a very smell of death
Hung round us night and day ;
Nor dared I look into the sea,
Where the old man's body lay.

" The captain in his cabin kept,
And bolted fast the door ;
The seamen, they walked up and down,
And wished the calm was o'er.

" The captain's son was on board with us,
A fair child, seven years old,
With a merry face that all men loved,
And a spirit kind and bold.

"I loved the child, and I took his hand
And made him kneel, and pray
That the crime for which the calm was sent
Might clean be purged away.

"For I thought that God would hear his prayer,
And set the vessel free:
'T was a dreadful curse, to lie becalmed
Upon that charnel sea.

"Yet I told him not wherefore he prayed,
Nor why the calm was sent;
I could not give that knowledge dark
To a soul so innocent.

"At length I saw a little cloud
Rise in that sky of flame,
A little cloud, that grew and grew,
And blackened as it came.

"We saw the sea beneath its track
Grow dark as was the sky;

And waterspouts, with rushing sound,
Like giants passed us by.

"And all around, 'twixt sky and sea,
A hollow wind did blow;
The sullen waves swung heavily;
The ship rocked to and fro.

"I knew it was that fierce death-calm
Its horrid hold undoing;
I saw the plagues of wind and storm
Their missioned work pursuing.

"There was a yell in the gathering winds,
A groan in the heaving sea:
The captain rushed from his place below,
But durst not look on me.

"He seized each rope with a madman's haste,
And set the helm to go,
And every sail he crowded on
As the furious winds did blow.

" Away they went, like autumn leaves
Before the tempest's rout;
The naked masts came crashing down,
The wild ship plunged about.

" The men to spars and splintered boards
Clung, till their strength was gone;
And I saw them from their feeble hold
Washed over, one by one;

" And 'mid the creaking timber's din,
And the roaring of the sea,
I heard the dismal, drowning cries
Of their last agony.

" There was a curse in the wind that blew,
A curse in the boiling wave;
And the captain knew that vengeance came
From the old man's ocean-grave.

" I heard him say, as he sate apart,
In a hollow voice and low,

'T is a cry of blood doth follow us,
And still doth plague us so!'

"And then those heavy iron chests
With desperate strength took he,
And ten of the strongest mariners
Did cast them into the sea.

"And out from the bottom of the sea
There came a hollow groan;—
The captain by the gunwale stood,
And looked like icy stone,
With a gasping sob he drew in his breath,
And spasms of death came on.

"And a furious boiling wave rose up,
With a rushing thundering roar;
I saw him fall before its force,
But I never saw him more.

"Two days before, when the storm began,
We were forty men and five,

"But ere the middle of that night
There were but two alive—

"The child and I: we were but two;
And he clung to me in fear.
Oh! it was pitiful to see
That meek child in his misery,
And his little prayers to hear.

"At length, as if his prayers were heard,
'T was calmer; and anon
The clear sun shone; and, warm and low,
A steady wind from the west did blow,
And drove us gently on.

"And on we drove, and on we drove,
That fair young child and I;
His heart was as a man's in strength,
And he uttered not a cry.

"There was no bread within the wreck,
And water we had none,

Yet he murmured not, and talked of hope,
When my last hopes were gone:
I saw him waste and waste away,
And his rosy cheek grow wan.

" Still on we drove, I know not where,
For many nights and days,
We were too weak to raise a sail,
Had there been one to raise.

" Still on we went, as the west wind drove,
On, o'er the pathless tide;
And I lay in sleep, 'twixt life and death,
With the young child at my side.

" And, as we thus were drifting on
Amid the Great South Sea,
An English vessel passed us by
That was sailing cheerily.
Unheard by me that vessel hailed,
And asked what we might be.

" The young child at the cheer rose up,
And gave an answering word;
And they drew him from the drifting wreck,
As light as is a bird.

" They took him gently in their arms,
And put again to sea:—
' Not yet! not yet!' he feebly cried;
' There was a man with me!'

" Again unto the wreck they turned,
Where, like one dead, I lay;
And a ship-boy small had strength enough
To carry me away.

" Oh! joy it was, when sense returned,
That fair warm ship to see,
And to hear the child within his bed
Speak pleasant words to me!

" I thought at first that we had died;
That all our pain was o'er,

And in a blessed ship of Heaven
We voyaged to its shore:

"But they were human forms that knelt
Beside our bed to pray,
And men with hearts most merciful
That watched us night and day.

"'T was a dismal tale I had to tell
Of wreck and wild distress;
But, even then, I told to none
The captain's wickedness.

"For I loved the boy, and could not cloud
His soul with sense of shame;
'T were an evil thing, thought I, to blast
A sinless orphan's name!
So he grew to be a man of wealth
And honourable fame.

"And in after years, when he had ships,
I sailed with him the sea,

" And in all the sorrows of my life
He was a friend to me;
And God hath blessed him everywhere
With a great prosperity."

THE HUNTER'S LINN.

THE hound is sitting by the stone,
The large black hound, and moaning ever;
And looking down, with wistful eyes,
Into the deep and lonesome river.

Afar he looks, and, 'mong the hills,
The castle's old grey tower he spyeth;
Yet human form he seeth none,
O'er all the moor that round him lieth.

The hound he moaneth bitterly;
The uneasy hound he moaneth ever;
And now he runneth up and down,
And now he yelleth to the river.

Unto the shepherd on the hills
Comes up the lonely creature's sorrow,

And troubleth sore the old man's heart,
Among his flocks, the long day thorough.

The afternoon grows dark betime,
The night winds, ere the night, are blowing,
And cold grey mists from out the fen
Along the forest-moor are going.

The castle looketh dark without,
Within, the rooms are cold and dreary;
The chill light from the window fades;
The fire it burneth all uncheery.

With meek hands crossed, beside the hearth
The pale and anxious mother sitteth:
And now she listens to the bat
That screaming round the window flitteth;

And now she listens to the winds
That come with moaning and with sighing;
And now unto the doleful owls
Calling afar and then replying.

And now she paces through the room,
And "He will come anon!" she sayeth;
And then she stirs the sleeping fire,
Sore marvelling why he thus delayeth.

Unto the window now she goes,
And looks into the evening chilly;
She sees the misty moors afar,
And sighs, "Why cometh not my Willie?"

The gusty winds wail round about;
The damps of evening make her shiver,
And, in the pauses of the wind,
She hears the rushing of the river.

"Why cometh not my Willie home?
Why comes he not?" the mother crieth;
"The winds wail dismally to-night,
And on the moors the grey fog lieth."

She listens to a sound, that comes
She knows not whence, of sorrow telling;

She listens to the large black hound,
That on the river side is yelling.

The hound he sitteth by the stone;
The uneasy hound he moaneth ever;
The homeward shepherd sees him there,
Beside the deep and lonesome river.

The mother listens eagerly,
The voice is as a doleful omen;
She shuts the casement, speaking low—
"It groweth late; he must be coming!

"Rise up, my women, every one,
And make the house so light and cheery;
My Willie cometh from the moors,
Home cometh he all wet and weary."

The hound he moaneth bitterly,
The moaning hound he ceaseth never,
He looks into the shepherd's face,
Then down into the darksome river.

The shepherd's heart is troubled sore,
Is troubled sore with woe and wonder,
And down into the linn he looks,
That lies the broken granite under.

He looks into the dark deep pool,
Within his soul new terror waking;
The hound sends forth a hollow moan,
As if his very heart were breaking.

The shepherd dimly sees a cloak,
He dimly sees a floating feather,
And farther down a broken bough,
And broken twigs of crimson heather.

The hound clings to the granite crags,
As o'er the deep dark pool he bendeth,
And piteous cries that will not cease
Into the darksome linn he sendeth.

Upon his staff the shepherd leans,
And for a little space doth ponder,

He looks all round, 't is drear and dim,
Save in the lit-up castle yonder.

" Ah ! " saith the old man, mournfully,
And tears adown his cheeks are falling,
" My lady watcheth for her son,
The hound is for his master calling ! "

THE FAIRIES OF THE CALDON LOW.

A Midsummer Legend.

"And where have you been, my Mary,
And where have you been from me?"
"I've been to the top of the Caldon Low,
The midsummer-night to see!"

"And what did you see, my Mary,
All up on the Caldon Low?"
"I saw the glad sunshine come down,
And I saw the merry winds blow."

"And what did you hear, my Mary,
All up on the Caldon Hill?"
"I heard the drops of the water made,
And the ears of the green corn fill."

"Oh! tell me all, my Mary,
All, all that ever you know;
For you must have seen the fairies,
Last night, on the Caldon Low."

"Then take me on your knee, mother;
And listen, mother of mine.
A hundred fairies danced last night,
And the harpers they were nine.

"And their harp-strings rung so merrily
To their dancing feet so small;
But oh! the words of their talking
Were merrier far than all."

"And what were the words, my Mary,
That then you heard them say?"
"I'll tell you all, my mother;
But let me have my way.

"Some of them played with the water,
And rolled it down the hill;

'And this,' they said, 'shall speedily turn
The poor old miller's mill:

"'For there has been no water
Ever since the first of May;
And a busy man will the miller be
At dawning of the day.

"'Oh! the miller, how he will laugh
When he sees the mill-dam rise!
The jolly old miller, how he will laugh
Till the tears fill both his eyes!'

"And some they seized the little winds
That sounded over the hill;
And each put a horn unto his mouth,
And blew both loud and shrill:

"'And there,' they said, 'the merry winds go
Away from every horn;
And they shall clear the mildew dank
From the blind, old widow's corn.

"'Oh! the poor, blind widow,
Though she has been blind so long,
She'll be blithe enough when the mildew's gone,
And the corn stands tall and strong.'

"And some they brought the brown lint-seed,
And flung it down from the Low;
'And this,' they said, 'by the sunrise,
In the weaver's croft shall grow.

"'Oh! the poor, lame weaver,
How will he laugh outright,
When he sees his dwindling flax-field
All full of flowers by night!'

"And then outspoke a brownie,
With a long beard on his chin;
'I have spun up all the tow,' said he,
'And I want some more to spin.

"'I've spun a piece of hempen cloth,
And I want to spin another;

A little sheet for Mary's bed,
And an apron for her mother.'

" With that I could not help but laugh,
And I laughed out loud and free;
And then on the top of the Caldon Low
There was no one left but me.

" And all on the top of the Caldon Low
The mists were cold and grey,
And nothing I saw but the mossy stones
That round about me lay.

" But, coming down from the hill-top,
I heard afar below,
How busy the jolly miller was,
And how the wheel did go.

" And I peeped into the widow's field,
And, sure enough, were seen
The yellow ears of the mildewed corn,
All standing stout and green.

"And down by the weaver's croft I stole,
To see if the flax were sprung;
But I met the weaver at his gate,
With the good news on his tongue.

"Now this is all I heard, mother,
And all that I did see;
So, pr'ythee, make my bed, mother,
For I'm tired as I can be."

DOLORES MARIS.

" THE earth is large," said one of twain,
" The earth is large and wide;
And it is filled with misery
And death, on every side."
Said the other: " Deep as it is wide
Is the sea, within all climes;
And it is fuller of misery
And death a thousand times.
The land has peaceful flocks and herds,
And sweet birds singing round;
But a myriad monstrous, hideous things
Within the sea are found.
Things all misshapen, slimy, cold,
Writhing, and strong, and thin;
And water-spouts, and whirlpools wild,
That draw the fair ships in.
I have heard of divers to the depths
Of the ocean forced to go,

To bring up pearls and twisted shells
From the viewless caves below;
I have heard of things in those dismal gulfs,
Like fiends, that hemmed them round:
I would not lead a diver's life
For every pearl that 's found.
I have heard how the sea-snake, huge and dark,
In the Arctic flood doth roll;
He hath coiled his tail, like a cable strong,
All round and round the Pole.
They say, when he stirs in the sea below,
The ice-rocks split asunder,
The mountains huge of the ribbëd ice,
With a deafening crack like thunder.
There's many an isle man wots not of,
Where the air is heavy with groans;
And the floor of the sea, the wisest say,
Is covered with dead men's bones.
I'll tell thee what: there's many a ship
In the wild North Ocean frore,
That has lain in the ice a thousand years,
And will lie a thousand more.

And the men — each one is frozen there,
In the place where he did stand;
The oar he pulled, the rope he threw,
Is frozen in his hand.
The sun shines there, but it warms them not,
Their bodies are wintry cold;
They are wrapped in ice that grows and grows,
All solid, and white, and old.
And there's many a haunted desert rock,
Where seldom ship doth go,
Where unburied men with fleshless limbs
Are moving to and fro;
They people the cliffs, they people the caves,
A ghastly company:
I never sailed there in a ship myself,
But I know that such there be.
And oh! that hot and horrid tract
Of the ocean of the Line!
There are millions of the negro men
Under that burning brine.
The ocean-sea doth moan and moan
Like an uneasy sprite,

And the waves are wan with a fiendish fire
That burneth all the night.
'T is a frightful thing to sail along,
Though a pleasant wind may blow,
When we think what a host of misery
Lies down in the sea below.
Didst ever hear of a little boat,
And in her there were three;
They had nought to eat, and nought to drink,
Adrift on the desert sea.
For seven days they bore their pain;
Then two men on the other
Did fix their longing, hungry eyes,
And that one was their brother.
And him they killed, and ate and drank,—
Oh me! 'twas a horrid thing!
For the dead should lie in a churchyard green,
Where the fragrant grasses spring.
And thinkest thou, but for mortal sin,
Such frightful things would be?—
In the land of the New Jerusalem
There will be no more sea."

DELICIÆ MARIS.

Once, when I was a little child,
I sate beneath a tree
Beside a little running stream,
And a mariner sate with me,
And thus he spake: "For seventy years
I sailed upon the sea.
Thou thinkest that the earth is fair,
And full of strange delight;
Yon little brook that murmurs by
Is wondrous in thy sight;
Thou callest yon poor butterfly
A very marvellous thing,
And listenest in a fond amaze
If but a lark doth sing.
Thou speak'st as if God only made
Valley, and hill, and tree;
Yet I blame thee not, thou simple child,
Wise men have spoke like thee.

But far and free are the ocean fields;
On land you 're trammeled round,
On the right and on the left likewise
Doth lie forbidden ground:
But the ocean fields are free to all
Where'er they list to go,
With the heavens above, and round about,
And the deep deep sea below.
It gladdeneth much my very soul
The smallest ship to see,
For I know where'er a sail is spread
God speaketh audibly.
Up to the North, the Polar North,
With the whales did I go,
'Mid the mountains of eternal ice,
To the land of thawless snow.
The great ice-mountains walled us in,
The strength of man was vain,
But at once the Eternal showed his power,
The rocks were rent in twain.
The sea was parted for Israel,
The great Red Sea, of yore;

And Moses and the Hebrew race,
In joy, went dryshod o'er.
A miracle as great was wrought
For us in the Polar Main,
The rocks were rent from peak to base,
And our course was free again.
Yet amid those seas so wild and stern,
Where man hath left no trace,
The sense of God came down to us
As in a holy place.
Great kings have piled up pyramids,
Have built them temples grand,
But the sublimest temple far
Is in yon northern land:
Its pillars are of the adamant,
By a thousand winters hewed;
Its priests are the awful Silence
And the ancient Solitude.
And then we sailed to the Tropic Seas,
That are like crystal clear;
Thou little child, 't is marvellous
Of them alone to hear;

For down, down in those ocean depths,
Many thousand fathoms low,
I have seen, like woods of mighty oaks,
The trees of coral grow;
The red, the green, and the beautiful
Pale-branched like the chrysolite,
Which amid the sun-lit waters spread
Their flowers intensely bright:
Some they were like the lily of June,
Or the rose of Fairy-land,
As if some poet's wondrous dream
Inspired a sculptor's hand.
And then the million creatures bright,
That sporting went and came:
Heaven knows! but, I think, in Paradise
It must have been the same;
When 'neath the trees where angels walked
The land was free to all,
When the lion gamboled with the kid,
The great ones with the small.
No wastes of burning sand are there,
There is not heat nor cold,

And there doth spring the diamond mine,
  There flow the veins of gold.
Oft with the divers of the East,
  Who in these depths have been,
Have I conversed of marvels strange,
  And treasures they have seen.
They say, each one, not halls of kings
  With the ocean caves can vie,
With the untrod caves of the carbuncle,
  Where the great sea-treasures lie.
And well I wot it must be so;
  Man parteth evermore
The miser-treasures of the earth,
  The sea has all its store.
I have crossed the Line full fifteen times,
  And down in the Southern Sea
Have seen the whales, like bounding lambs,
  Leap up; the strong, the free,
Leap up, the creatures that God hath made
  To people the isleless main:
They have no bridle in their jaws,
  And on their necks no rein.

But, my little child, thou sittest here
Still gazing on yon stream,
And the wondrous things that I have told
To thee are as a dream.
To me they are as living thoughts;
And well I understand
Why the sublimest sea is still
More glorious than the land:
For when at first the world awoke
From its primæval sleep,
Not on the land the Spirit of God
Did move, but on the deep.

LILIEN MAY.

An Easter Legend.

PART I.

'T was on the Easter Sunday morn,
That, from the blessed skies,
Came down the holy angels,
To see our Lord arise:

To see our dear Lord Jesus rise
From death, whose bonds were riven;
And give him back unto his friends,
Before he went to heaven.

Oh, happy Easter Sunday morn!
Of old they blessed the day;
And gifts, in memory of that time,
In love they gave away.

The rich gave gifts abundantly,
The poor gave gifts also;
For every heart at Easter, then,
With love did overflow.

But these old times are past and gone;
None hasten now to bring
The happy resurrection news,
And hymns of Easter sing.

Yet here and there, among the hills,
In places far and lone,
Some memory of the time yet lives,
Some Easter love is shown.

And kindly country-women, yet,
Their Pasch-eggs ready make,
Of divers colours beautiful,
To give for Jesus' sake.

And little country children go
Far o'er the hills away,

From door to door, with cheerful hymns,
To celebrate the day.

Oh, happy Easter Monday!
It shineth clear and bright;
And they shall go a dozen miles
Among the hills ere night.

O'er the bleak fells, and down the dells
That lie so warm and low,
To the cottage and the grey farm-house
Shall the neighbour-children go.

Each hand in hand, a loving band,
They go with joy along;
And tune their voices, sweet and low,
To a holy Easter song.

And far along the sunny hills
Were heard their voices clear:
"Be glad, for our Lord Jesus rose
At this time of the year!"

The pleasant voice of singing came
To a cottage on the moor,
Where sate the lovely Lilien May
Beside her mother's door.

Her locks were bright as shining gold,
Her eyes as harebells blue,
And the red, red rose of summer
Had given her cheeks its hue.

Sweet Lilien May was four years old;
And "I am strong," said she;
"And I'll run after them with speed,
And sing in company.

"And I'll be back by night, mother,
And I'll be back before."
Her careful mother heard her not,
Nor missed her from the door.

On went the cheerful singing band,
Like merry birds, away;

And on, among the budding broom,
Went after, Lilien May.

The sky was bright above her head,
The earth beneath her feet;
And the little maiden sung aloud
Her carol wild and sweet.

Down, down the glen, she wandered down,
Where the mountain stream ran clear;
Across the moor, and up the fell,
Without a thought of fear.

She watched the glancing lizard slide
Into his narrow hold,
And little birds that built their nests
All on the open wold.

Beside her fed the mountain flocks,
On the hills so wild and high;
And the gentle herd looked after her,
As she went singing by.

On, on, with little nimble feet,
She wandered farther still,
Up to the heights of rocky stone,
Where whistling winds blew shrill.

Through those bright locks of golden hair,
The strong, cold winds did blow;
And the red rose upon her cheek
All rosier yet did glow.

She saw the raven sitting there,
She heard his croaking cry,
She saw him look askance at her,
Yet did not fear his eye.

The place was wild, and stern, and drear,
An herbless waste of stone;
Yet merry singing Lilien
Feared not to be alone.

On, on again she wandered on,
Down from the mountain grey;

Where all before her, brown and wild,
The wide fell stretched away.

On, on she went; her mother's door
Lay many a mile behind:
But now a strange and lonesome dread
Came creeping o'er her mind.

She saw the fells so wild and brown;
She saw the grey rocks hoar;
And all at once she saw them look
As they had not looked before:
The fells were wild, and drear, and brown,
The mountains stern and hoar.

The sky, so blue, no more was blue;
The golden sun was set;
The air was keen, and thin, and cold;
The spongy turf was wet.

Sweet Lilien May looked all around;
Yet nothing could she see,

But afar a flock of mountain sheep,
And anigh a grey thorn-tree.

Sweet Lilien May she listened then;
But nothing could she hear,
Save afar a sound of running streams,
And a croaking raven near.

"'The water is deep,'" quoth Lilien,
"'And the raven's beak is strong;
And goblins three dance 'neath the tree,
Thorough the night so long.'
I wish the blind man had not sung,"
Said she, "that evil song."

"And the night grows dark," quoth Lilien,
"And the fells are brown and drear:
Oh mother! mother! come to me,"
Cried Lilien, "mother dear!"

Adown the fells went Lilien,
But she wist not whither at all;

And against the stones and twisted roots
She struck her feet so small.

Among the night-black furze she went,
Still calling for her mother;
And now she lost one little shoe,
And now she lost the other.

And all among the prickly furze,
That grew so black around,
Sweet Lilien thrust her pretty hands;
But never a shoe she found.

And ever as she groped about,
The streaming tears did fall;
And the prickles of the thorny furze
They pierced her fingers small.

And ever as she groped about,
Beneath the darksome sky,
Where'er she trode, a little trace
Of crimson blood did lie;

And, " Mother, mother, come to me!"
Was still her moaning cry.

Three paces on went Lilien May,
With bare and aching feet;
When, lo! she heard, among the furze,
A soft and gentle bleat,

The bleating of a mountain sheep
That lay in quiet there.
Down by its side sank Lilien May,
No farther could she fare.

Down by its side sank Lilien,
Her little heart so full,
And her yellow locks of dewy hair
Fell o'er its snow-white wool.

And God, who saw her all alone
In the darkness where she lay,
He sent a heavy sleep that took
Her misery all away.

PART II.

Now turn we to her mother's house:
"And where is Lilien gone,
My little, merry Lilien?"
Quoth she to many a one.

Said they, "We saw thy Lilien
Go with the singing train:
Fear not, they'll bring the pretty child
At nightfall back again!"

The eve is come, and up the fell
Is heard a sound of glee;
The mother rose, and said, "They bring
My Lilien back to me."

And down she reached the wheaten bread,
The new-baked and the sweet;
"My Lilien shall have that she loves,"
Said she, "this night to eat."

And out unto the door she went
To meet the singing train:
"And wherefore is't ye bring me not
My Lilien back again?"

"We have not seen thy Lilien,
With us she did not go."
"A wretched woman am I, then!"
The mother shrieked in woe.

"Go fetch my husband from the fold,
Call up my neighbours dear,
And seek with me my Lilien,
Be she afar or near!"

Up came the father from the fold,
A woful man was he;
And up came neighbours many a one,
A kindly company.

"And we will seek thy Lilien
Through all the country round;

We will not rest," cried many a one,
" Till Lilien May is found."

And north and south, and east and west,
The neighbour folks divide;
And all that night sweet Lilien's name
Was echoed far and wide.

All drear and dark the night came on,
The cutting winds did blow;
Yet ever on, throughout the night,
Did the weeping parents go.

" I ne'er shall see my child again!"
The woful mother cried.
" We'll find her," said the father good,
" Please Heaven to be our guide!"

And on they went throughout the night,
Still calling Lilien May:
" Oh, answer us, dear Lilien!"
They cried till break of day.

Then came they to the spongy bog,
The running stream anigh,
And the raven, from the grey thorn-tree,
Croaked low as they went by.

And then the waste of darksome furze
Stretched out before them wide:
Down dropped the mother on her knees,
For a gladsome sight she spied.

The little shoe of Lilien!
She kissed it o'er and o'er,
And from her eyes the joyful tears,
Like streaming rain, did pour.

"Now blessed be God!" the father said,
"That he with us did keep!"
Ten paces on, and they beheld
Sweet Lilien fast asleep!"

'T is not for me to tell their joy,
By them alone 't is wist;

Sometimes they kissed her snow-white cheeks,
Sometimes her lips they kissed.

They kissed her wounded hands and feet;
They kissed her curling hair:
Then cheering drops of healing wine
They gave with tender care.

At length her feeble eyes she oped
Unto the dawning day,
And gently spake: "Oh, mother dear,
Let me go home, I pray!"

They bore her in their careful arms
A dozen miles or more;
And joyful were the neighbours dear,
As they came near their door.

All warm within the snow-white sheets
They laid her on her bed,
And o'er her a green coverlet,
And a pillow 'neath her head.

And in that heavy sleep she lay
Until the evening bell;
Then rose she up, sweet Lilien,
All rosy-red and well.

And, on the Sabbath next, the priest,
Bare-headed, blessed the Lord,
Before all men, within the church,
That Lilien was restored.

A TALE OF THE WOODS.

"SPEAK not," she said, "of bookish tales,
Of haunted halls and spectres bold,
For things in real life there are
More sadly wild, more dismal far,
Than ever fiction told;
And you shall hear a tale of truth,
The pains and sorrows of my youth.

"From very childhood I had learned
Labour and weariness to bear:
My parents died; and upon me
Devolved a numerous family,
And many an early care;
Sickly the children were, and small,
And yet I reared and nurtured all.

"We lived upon a northern moor,
And 'mong the heath wild berries grew;
It was a lonesome place, yet fair;
And from the hills a clear fresh air
Ever around it blew;
And sparkling streams, o'er moss and stone,
From hidden springs went singing on.

"The freshness of that wholesome air
Gave strength unto each youthful frame;
And a wild flow of spirits strong
Made labour lightly pass along,
Till other troubles came.
Ah! Love doth cunning snares devise,
To draw young hearts from Paradise!

"To me, a simple country maid,
He came in glorious colours dressed;
With brow erect and stately limb,
A soldier-youth, in gallant trim,
With helm and nodding crest;

And burning speech, that poured along
Like rivers of the mountains strong.

" We wedded; and I left my home,
That pure and solitary life,
In busy camps the arts to learn
Of evil natures, cold and stern;
To be a soldier's wife;
To have no home, to roam afar,
Still following the career of war.

" A marching regiment was ours,
And to America was sent;
Our station was among the woods,
In dreary desert solitudes,
Mong marshes pestilent;
Where, left uncertain of their fate,
They grew morose, then desperate.

" No wonder that the brave rebelled!
The food was scant, the water bad;

And the hot air was filled with flies,
Whose stings were scorching agonies
That well nigh drove us mad:
And there, for weary months we lay,
Not living — dying day by day.

" My husband was a daring man,
Lawless, and wild, and resolute;
And spirits like his own were there,
Who leagued themselves with him, and sware
His word to execute:
In vain my heart foreboded ill,
I could not turn his stubborn will.

" We left the camp at still midnight,
And struck into the thickest wood;
By day to dreary caves we crept,
And, while some watched, the others slept;
By night our course pursued,
Still keeping westward, and away
From tracts where habitations lay.

" Oh, how I envied the wild things
That lived in forest or morass!
They had no fear: but my weak heart
Died if a squirrel did but start,
Or stir the withered grass;
And, when my comrades laughed and sung,
With boding dread my soul was wrung.

" My terror peopled the still woods:
And, like the snake, beneath the trees
I saw the creeping Indian prone;
Yet no eye saw him but mine own.
I heard upon the breeze,
When others said the air was mute,
Wild voices as in hot pursuit.

" In vain we sought a safe retreat,
For us the wilderness had none;
Till drooping heart and failing strength
Wore out the little band at length;
They dropped off one by one,

Without a sigh from kindred grief,
Scarce noticed, like an autumn leaf.

" At last we two alone remained;
And then an Indian hut we found,
A wild, and low, and dismal place,
Where savage life left many a trace
Of murder all around;
Three shattered skulls, deformed and bare,
And tangled tufts of human hair,
And many a horrid stain was there.

" Yet even there we made our home;
It was so lone, so lost, so wide
Of any track, my husband said,
' Here we are safe as with the dead,
And here we will abide.'
And so we might, but for the awe
Of what I heard and what I saw.

" I'll tell you. He was in the woods:
He had been gone since morning clear,

And then 't was nightfall; and I heard
The bullfrog and the wailing bird,
And wild wolf barking near;
And through the grass, and in the brake,
I heard the rattling of the snake.

"I made a fire outside the door,
To keep the creatures from my home;
And in the gloom I sate me down,
Still looking to the forest brown,
And wishing he would come;
When in the black hut's furthest nook
I heard a sound. Scarce dared I look;

"And yet I did. The skulls lay there,
And there I saw a wannish flame;
And, one by one, those bones so cold
Grew horrid faces, black and old;
And from their jaws there came
Mutterings and jibberings, low at first,
Then loud and louder, till they burst
Like thundering yells from lungs accursed.

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" A din as of ten thousand wheels
Seemed whirling, stunning, in my brain;
And that fiend's fire, all multiplied,
Dazzled and danced in circles wide,
Now pale, then bright again!
I felt my stiffened hair stand up,
And, cold as death, my pulses stop.

" 'T was midnight when my husband came;
The fire of pinewood had burned low;
And stiff, with eyeballs staring wide,
He found me, speechless, stupefied,
And pale as desert snow:
Long time he strove with loving pain,
Ere he recalled my life again.

" I told him all: and that lone place
We left before the morning smiled;
And then beneath the forest tree
We lived in simple luxury,
Like natives of the wild;

Our food the chase supplied; our wine
The clusters of the Indian vine.

" But man is tyrant to his brother.
They heard of the free life we led;
They found him, like the Indian, dressed
In hunter-spoils, and with a crest
Of feathers on his head.
Oh, stony hearts! they did not heed;
A cruel vengeance they decreed.

" They hung him on a forest tree,
As he a murderer had been.
Oh, wretched man! If he did wrong,
'T was that temptation had been strong;
Nor was it deadly sin.
They staid by him till life had fled,
And then they left me with the dead.

" 'T was well for me that I was used
To hardship from my early years,

Or I had never borne that hour:
But Christ sustained my heart with power,
And freed my soul from fears;
And in the desert, all alone,
Beside the dead I made my moan.

"I washed his body in the stream
That through a neighbouring thicket ran;
I closed his eyes; I combed his hair;
I laid his limbs with decent care;
He was a murdered man.
I saw, upon the second day,
The raven watching for his prey.

"Then, then, I first began to feel
That I was all alone, alone!
Wildly I glanced behind each tree;
The Indian had been company,
Aught human must have pitied me,
But human form was none:
Then, with a firm but sad intent,
In silence to my work I went.

"I found a hollow by the stream,
A little cave, where one might lie
In shelter from the noonday sun;
There bore I my uncoffined one,
And wished I too could die.
I laid him on the rocky floor,
With moss and white sand sprinkled o'er.

"The entrance to the cave was low,
Scarce rising two feet from the ground,
And this, with long unwearied care,
I closed with stones collected there,
That by none might be found
The sepulchre, so lone and dim,
Where in my grief I buried him.

"There was a large and mossy stone
Without the cave, and there I sate,
Like Mary by the sepulchre:
But a bright angel sate with her;
I, I was desolate.

Oh, miserable time of woe!
How it went by I do not know.

"I must have perished with the dead,
From that great grief, and want of food,
But that an English party, sent
To burn an Indian settlement,
There found me in the wood.
They bore me thence; they clothed, they fed,
And my poor spirit comforted.

"Since then 'tis five and fifty years;
So long, it might seem fancy all,
But that I know this silver hair
Was whitened by that heavy care;
And names and dates I can recall,
So deeply in my soul inlaid
By burning pangs, they cannot fade."

1834.

MAY MAXWELL.

O'ER the broad hills of Lammermoor;
In the grey light of the morn,
Lord Maxwell and his children fair
Rode out with hound and horn;

Lord Maxwell and his daughter May
With her bold brothers three;
And far they rode o'er the heathy hills,
A merry company.

With hawk and hound good sport had they
Those heathy wilds among;
And home they rode at eventide,
When the wood-lark poured his song.

The next eve, when the wood-lark's song
Poured from the leafy spray,

All deathly pale, upon her bed
The little maiden lay:

With her white cheek pillowed mournfully,
And a death-look in her eye;
With her mother sitting at her head,
And her father standing by;

And those bright youths, her brothers three,
Their faces dim with sorrow,
For they knew their little sister May
Would die before the morrow.

"Now bring to me," she meekly said,
And raised her heavy eye,
"My hawk and hound, that I once more
May see them ere I die."

They brought her hawk, and the gentle bird
Perched on her slender wrist;
And drooped his head, and nestled close
To her white lips to be kissed.

"Now fare ye well, my bonny bird!
We two no more shall go
O'er the broad hills of Lammermoor,
When morning breezes blow.

They brought her hound, that evermore
Was fleetest in the chase;
The creature raised a piteous moan,
As he looked into her face.

"Now fare ye well, my gentle hound,
I loved ye well, you know;
But never more, at cheer of mine,
To the lone hills shall ye go.

"My milk-white steed in his stable stands
And may stand in his stall;
For I never more in life shall go
From out my father's hall.

"My hawk, and hound, and little steed,
A fair and noble three,

My gentle brothers, shall be yours;
And love them tenderly:
And, when ye ride to Lammermoor,
Have pleasant thoughts of me.

"Father, farewell! you have ever been
A father kind and dear;
I little thought, but yesternight,
Our parting was so near.

"Oh! mother, let me hold thy hand;
We two have gone together
Through leafy woods, and up the glens,
In the pleasant summer weather.

"And more than this, on winter nights
I sate beside thy chair,
And heard thee read in holy books,
When thou wast not aware.

"I heard the words that were not meant,
Dear mother, for my ear;

I pondered on them night and day,
And God has made them clear.

" So farewell all; and do not grieve
For me, when I am gone;
There is a home in heaven for me,
And kind friends many a one."

And thus she died: and six fair girls,
Upon her burial day,
Bore her into the chapel where
The old Lord Maxwells lay.

And many a day, in that old hall,
Great mourning was there made;
And her brothers three, they sighed for her
In the greenwood, when they played.

And ne'er again to the broad green hills
Did her noble father ride,
But he sighing wished that his daughter May
Were riding at his side.

And ne'er did her lady-mother sit
In her chamber, reading low,
But the tears fell fast on the open page,
And her soul was dark with woe.

Now ye who go to the Maxwell's hall,
Go into the chapel grey,
And ye'll see the tombs of the grim old lords,
And the tomb of the gentle May.

Then think upon this tale of mine,
And drop a tear of sorrow;
And so may life, as it passeth on,
Bring ever a bright good-morrow!

1829.

THE ISLES OF THE SEA FAIRIES.

Among the Isles of the golden Mist
I lived for many a year;
And all that chanced unto me there
'T is well that ye should hear.

I dwelt in a hall of silvery pearl,
With rainbow-light inlaid;
I sate on a throne, old as the sea,
Of the ruby coral made.

The old carbuncle lit the dome,
Where I was made a king;
The crown was wrought of pale sea-gold,
So was my fairy ring.

And she who on my right hand sate
As the morning star was fair;

She was clothed in a robe of shadowy light,
And veiled by her golden hair.

They made me king of the Fairy Isles,
That lie in the golden mist,
Where the coral rocks and the silvery sand
By singing waves are kissed.

Far off, in the ocean solitudes
They lie, a glorious seven;
Like a beautiful group of sister stars,
In the untraced heights of heaven:

For the mariner sails them round about,
But he comes them not anigh;
They are hid far off, in a secret place
Of the sea's immensity.

Oh beautiful isles! where comes no death,
Where no winter enters in,
Where the fairy race, like the lily flowers,
Do neither toil nor spin!

Oh beautiful isles! where the coral rocks
Like an ancient temple stand,
Like a temple of wondrous workmanship
For a lofty worship planned!

The heights of heaven they roof it in,
O'er-spanned like an azure bow;
And its floor is the living waves of light,
That cover the depths below;

The unsunned depths of the ancient sea,
Where the fairy kings of old
Stored up, in emerald caverns vast,
Their treasure-hoards and gold.

Oh beautiful isles! When the waning moon
Sinks down from the vales of earth,
She rises upon those fairy seas,
And gives their daylight birth.

There comes no cloud to dim her ray,
She shines forth pure and bright;

The silver moon she shines by day,
The golden mist by night.

Oh beautiful isles! And a fairy race,
As the dream of a poet, fair,
Now hold the place by a charmed spell,
With power o'er sea and air.

Their boats are made of the large pearl-shell
That the waters cast to land;
With carvëd prows more richly wrought
Than works of mortal hand.

They skim along the silver waves
Without or sail or oar;
Whenever the fairy voyager would,
The pearl ship comes to shore.

They taught me the song which is their speech,
A tone of love divine;
They set me down to their banquet board,
And poured out fairy wine.

The wine of the old sea-vintage red,
That was made long years ago,
More rich than the blood in kingly veins,
Yet pure and cool as snow.

I loved that idle life for a time;
But when that time was by,
I pined again for another change,
For the love in a human eye.

They brought me then a glorious form,
And gave her for my bride;
I looked on her, and straight forgot
That I was to earth allied.

I snatched the crown they offered me;
I forgot what I had been;
I snatched the crown to be a king,
That she might be a queen.

For many a year and more, I dwelt
In those isles of soft delight;

Where all was kind and beautiful,
With neither death nor night.

We danced on the sands when the silver moon
Through the coral arches gleamed,
And pathways broad of glittering light
O'er the azure waters streamed.

Then shot forth many a pearly boat,
Like stars, across the sea;
And songs were sung, and shells were blown
That set wild music free.

For many a year and more, I dwelt
With neither thought nor care,
Till I forgot almost my speech,
Forgot both creed and prayer.

At length it chanced that as my boat
Went on its charmëd way,
I came unto the veil of mist
Which round the Seven Isles lay.

Even then it was a Sabbath morn;
A ship was passing by,
And I heard a hundred voices raise
A sound of psalmody.

A mighty love came o'er my heart,
A yearning toward my kind,
And unwittingly I spoke aloud
The impulse of my mind.

"Oh take me hence, ye Christian men!"
I cried in spiritual want;
Anon the golden mist gave way,
That had been like adamant.

The little boat wherein I sate
Seemed all to melt away;
And I was left upon the sea,
Like Peter, in dismay.

Those Christian mariners, amazed,
Looked on me in affright;

Some cried I was an evil ghost,
And some a water sprite.

But the chaplain seized the vessel's boat,
With mercy prompt and boon,
And took me up into the ship
As I fell into a swoon.

As one that in delirious dreams
Strange things doth hear and see,
So passed before my mind the shapes
Of this bright heresy.

In vain I told of what had happed;
No man to me would list;
They jested at the Fairy Isles,
And at the golden mist.

They swore I was a shipwrecked man,
Tossed on the dreary main;
And pitied me, because they thought
My woes had crazed my brain.

At length when I perceived how dull
The minds of men had grown,
I locked these things within my soul
For my own thought alone.

And soon a wondrous thing I saw;
I now was old and grey,
A man of threescore years and ten,
A weak man in decay.

And yesterday, and I was young!
Time did not leave a trace
Upon my form, whilst I abode
Within the charmëd place.

I trembled at the fearful work
Of threescore years and ten;
I asked for love, but I had grown
An alien among men.

I passed among the busy crowds;
I marked their care and pain,

And how they spent their manhood's strength,
To make but little gain.

I saw besotted men mistake
For gold unworthy clay;
And many more who sell their souls
For the pleasures of a day.

I saw how years on years roll on
As a tale that hath been told,
And then at last they start, like me,
To find that they grow old.

Said I, "These men laugh me to scorn;
My wisdom they resist;
But they themselves abide, like me,
Within a golden mist.

"Oh, up, and save yourselves! Even now
The ship goes hurrying by;
I hear the hymn of souls redeemed,
Who are bound for eternity!"

WILLIE O' WYBURN.

PART I.

How Willie o' Wyburn goes to study with the Monks of Elverslie.

WYBURN WILLIE was pale and thin,
And he was ten years old;
He dwelt with his mother, a widow poor,
And books loved more than gold.

Willie, when he was a little child,
He did not rave and cry;
His spirit was meek as a little saint's,
Yet bright was his dark blue eye.

Willie, he did not run about
With the forest-boys at play;
But he sate beside his mother's door
A-reading all the day.

The long, long words he could spell them,
And their meaning he could tell;
And, by the time he was five years old,
He could read the missal well.

There was not a prayer to any saint,
But he the prayer did know;
Nor a carol good, nor ballad sweet,
That he could not sing also.

"Now, where gat ye this learning, Willie?"
Said a monk of Elverslie,
"And where did ye get this learning,
For no scholar's son ye be?

"Your mother she cannot read, poor soul,
Nor is it meet she should;
Then how did ye get this learning,
All in this lonesome wood?"

"My learning, methinks, is small," said Willie,
"The aves and the creed,

"And the prayers, out of a missal old,
I learnëd them to read.

"And the forest-folk they sing their songs
All in the forest dim;
And whenever a wandering harper comes,
I learn a deal from him.

"I'm full of thought when the organ peals,
Or when the bells are rung;
And I often go down to Elverslie,
To hear the masses sung."

"Thou shalt dwell with me," said the good old monk,
"In the house at Elverslie;
For thy Latin is spoken sore amiss,
And I'll make a clerk of thee."

Said Willie, "'T would break my mother's heart,
If with her I do not stay;
Therefore I will go to Elverslie,
If it please you, every day."

Now Willie goes down to Elverslie,
Through the forest doth he go,
In the hot days of the summer,
And through the winter's snow.

Willie he read, and Willie he wrote,
And his head is sound and clear;
And the fame of Willie o' Wyburn
It spreadeth far and near.

PART II.

How Willie o' Wyburn spends a Day in the Forest, and what he saw.

Now Willie is ten years old this day,
And pale and thin is he,
And his mother she said, "This reading
Will be the death of thee!

"So, Willie, I pray, for this one day,
That thou thy books wilt leave,
And spend a merry day i' the wood,
From the morn unto the eve."

Willie he laid his books adown.
" And I will do this thing,
Nor open another book," said he,
" Till the vesper bell shall ring."

The summer sun shone over his head,
The larks sung from the sky,
And the forest-streams, among the leaves,
With a talking sound went by.

The blackbird and the throstle-cock
On the forest-boughs sang clear;
And he heard far off the cawing rooks,
And the cooing stockdoves near.

" 'T is a pleasant thing," said Willie,
" In the forest thus to roam;
For songs and thoughts keep with me,
Though my books are all at home."

On and on went Willie
Over the mosses brown,

Till he came to the forest-valley,
Where lay the little town.

The grey roofs of the houses small
In the warm sunshine did lie;
And the taper spire of the church uprose
Above them, sharp and high.

And through the bright sunshiny fields
The winding path was seen;
And the peaceful cows were grazing,
And the budding corn was green.

He heard the busy mill-wheel sound;
The merry children shout;
And the cheerful women, from their doors,
He saw pass in and out.

From the upland slope looked Willie
Into this valley fair;
And a love sprang up within his heart
For every creature there.

Then down into the town he went,
And onward through the street,
And he got a kindly passing word
From all whom he did meet.

Then on into the greenwood
Went Willie once again;
And he saw the baron riding there
With all his hunting train.

There were four and twenty noblemen,
And ladies half a score;
Willie so brave and fair a sight
Had never seen before.

The hunters they were all in green
With long bows in their hand;
To see them riding gaily by,
Willie he made a stand.

The ladies they were on palfreys white,
The nobles they were on bay;

And the bugles blew with a "tira lee!"
As they came by the way.

"What a gallant sight," said Willie, "'tis,
To see them ride along!"
And he sang aloud, as he went his way,
A blithe old hunting song.

Still on went he along the road,
As cheerful as could be;
And next he saw, coming slowly up,
A pilgrim company.

All slowly, slowly travelled they,
And yet they were right merry,
Both young and old; and they were bound
To the shrine at Canterbury.

Willie he lookëd after them,
And a good wish wishëd he,
That the pilgrims all might rest next day
At the house of Elverslie.

PART III.

How Willie o' Wyburn meets with a Minstrel, and how he comes home again.

THEN Willie he sate him down awhile
Beside a water clear,
And he was aware of a tinkling harp
So sweetly sounding near.

And a minstrel youth came cheerily up,
With a light step and a gay,
Touching a small harp, as he walked,
To a lightsome roundelay.

"Now whither go you?" said Willie;
"And in good time may it be!"
"I'm wending down," said the minstrel youth,
"To the house of Elverslie."

"Then let me wend with you," said Willie,
"And let me be your guide;

For I know the shortest ways and best
Throughout the forest wide."

Then over the hills together they went,
And down into a glen;
And there they met with Robin Hood
A-shooting with his men.

Says Robin, "I love to shoot the deer
Among my merry men tall:
I love to drink the abbot's wine,
But song I love more than all.

"Come, give us a song, a greenwood song,
All under this forest-tree,
And you shall share in the booty good
That we get at Elverslie;
For even now the abbot's gold
Doth call aloud for me."

Then the minstrel youth he touched his harp,
And sung so sweet and clear,

That Robin he leaned against a tree,
And held his breath to hear.

And the minstrel youth again he played,
And in such skilful wise,
That bold Robin Hood and all his men
They stood with tearful eyes.

When the minstrel youth had ceased to play,
Bold Robin he raised his eyen,
And said, "By my fay, thou minstrel,
I never heard harp like thine;
I'll keep thee with me i' th' good greenwood,
And make thee a man of mine."

"Nay," said the youth, "in the good greenwood
With thee I cannot stay."
"Then ask a boon," said Robin Hood,
"And thou shalt have thy say."

"I want no boon," said the minstrel,
"I want no boon at all."

"Then this, thy boy, shall ask a boon,"
Said Robin, stout and tall;
"And I swear to heaven to grant his boon,
Whether 'tis great or small."

Then Willie he steppëd forth in haste,
And fell upon one knee,
"A boon, a boon, bold Robin Hood!
This boon I ask of thee;
That thou nor thy men should waste at all
The house of Elverslie;

"That now and for ever, both old and young,
Its goods and gear thou save;
For the love of Christ, true Robin Hood,
This is the boon I crave."

"Oh! oh!" says Robin, "is this your boon?
Is this the boon I hear?
By the soul of my mother, my merry men,
Our harping costs us dear.

" But it shall not be said that bold Robin Hood
From his oath did set him free:
So the jolly old monks may keep their gold,
And drink their wine for me;
For thy word's sake, we will not touch
The house of Elverslie."

Then the minstrel youth and Willie they went
Away from bold Robin Hood;
And at close of day they entered
The path of Wyburn wood.

" Now rest this night with me," said Willie,
" At Wyburn rest this night;
I'll be thy guide to Elverslie
As soon as the morning's light."

Said the minstrel youth, " How may this be?
I pray thee make it clear;
'Tis the fame of Willie o' Wyburn
That now hath brought me here.

"And if *thou* art Wyburn Willie,
As such thou seem'st to be,
I'll rest with thee till morning light,
Nor wend to Elverslie."

With that the mother opened the door,
The door she opened wide,
Saying, "Welcome to thee, my Willie,
And to this young man beside!"

The minstrel youth and Willie went in,
And closëd to the door;
And such a blithe eve as that was spent
At Wyburn never before.

PART IV.

How the Pilgrims halt at Elverslie, and how the Minstrel Youth gets a Bond from Robin Hood.

When Willie upon the morrow went
To the house of Elverslie,
He found it as full as it could hold
Of the pilgrim company.

How strange it was, in that quiet place,
To hear such stir and din;
The stabled steeds that stood without,
The bustle there was within!

There was not a monk at Elverslie
But sought the news to know;
The abbot had guests on his parlour hearth,
The cook had guests also.

How happy was Willie o' Wyburn
To hear what they could say!
'Twas an easy task, and a short one,
That Willie read that day.

Nor was it till vespers all were done,
And the candles burnëd bright,
And the guests sat nodding in their chairs,
That Willie went home that night.

And scarcely Willie a mile had gone
Under the greenwood tree,

When the minstrel youth, with harp in hand,
Walked up to Elverslie.

And as he stood on the old door sill,
Under the archway tall,
He touched his harp, and its harpings came
To the guests within the hall.

He touched his harp yet once again,
And sang with such delight,
That the sleepy guests raised up their heads,
And sat in their chairs upright.

The abbot himself looked round about,
And, "Bid yon harper in;
For," said he, "the skill of yon harper
His supper this night shall win."

Then the minstrel youth stepped lightly in,
With a gay and graceful air;
The abbot and every guest was glad
To see a youth so fair.

He bent himself with a noble grace;
And, "By your leave," said he,
"I'll sing a song I made this day
All under the greenwood tree."

Then he touched his harp to a prelude soft,
And wild as a bird i' the wood;
And he sang of Willie o' Wyburn,
And the outlaw, Robin Hood.

He sang of Wyburn Willie,
How far his fame was told;
Yet how he was so meek and good,
Like a youthful saint of old.

He sang how Willie o' Wyburn
Went down upon his knee,
And saved from the spoiler, Robin Hood,
The house of Elverslie.

The abbot he lookëd round about,
His brow all pale with fear;

And, "Is the outlaw, Robin Hood,"
Said he, "in the forest here?"

Then the minstrel youth again went on,
And sang how Robin Hood
Had sworn, for Willie o' Wyburn's sake,
An oath within the wood:

"That neither he, nor his merry men,
Wherever they might be,
Should touch a hair of what belonged
To the house of Elverslie.

"That every soul from Elverslie
The forest-roads might take
Early or late, and should go free
For Willie o' Wyburn's sake.

"And this, for Willie o' Wyburn's sake,
Is the thing that he will do."
And with it he gave a parchment
That was sealed and signëd too.

The abbot looked up with glad amaze,
And the very roof did ring
With the name of Wyburn Willie,
For whom was done this thing.

Then a cup of wine the abbot took,
And golden pieces nine;
And said to the minstrel, "Take thou these,
For this good song of thine.

"But where is Willie o' Wyburn?
I pray thee say in sooth."
And every guest spake loudly forth,
"Let's see this wondrous youth!"

The minstrel smiling took the gold,
And drank the wine so clear;
And says he, "I'll bring this Willie,
By early morning, here."

PART V.

How Willie o' Wyburn receives a Boon from the Abbot of Elverslie, and how he has a Library of his own.

THE dews hung sparkling on the grass,
And freshly blew the breeze,
And the morning smoke of Elverslie
Curled high above the trees.

Says the minstrel, "I shall tell thee nought:
The abbot for thee hath sent;
Perchance thy Latin was done amiss,
And thou'lt be sorely shent."

"Nay, nay," says Willie, "I fear not that,
Yet I am puzzled sore;
For I never was summoned to Elverslie
In such a way before."

"Who knows," replied the minstrel youth,
And hastened more his speed,

" But they some crabbed old books have got,
Which they want a clerk to read. "

" Perchance," said Willie, " it may be so,
Perchance it so may be;
Some wise, old book, which doth belong
To the pilgrim company."

When the twain set out from Wyburn,
'T was with the rising sun;
And when they came to Elverslie
The matins just were done.

Amazed was Wyburn Willie,
As he came in, to see
The abbot, the monks, and the pilgrims all,
In the hall at Elverslie.

It must be a rare old book, indeed,
Thought Willie, but nought he said;
It must be a rare, old book, to bring
The abbot from out his bed!

Amazed was Willie, but more amazed
When he heard them all to say,
"Here's welcome to Wyburn Willie,
A welcome good this day!"

Then the abbot he prayed them all be still,
And let their welcomes wait;
And he called up Willie o' Wyburn
To the board-head where he sate.

And, said he, "For the deed which thou hast done,
This noble deed and good;
For the saving the house of Elverslie
From the spoiler, Robin Hood;

"Now ask whatever thou wilt, my son,"
Said he, "and ask it soon;
"Thou didst win thy boon from an outlaw,
Thou shalt win from me thy boon."

Willie he lifted up his face,
As red as the rising day,

And said he, "I know not, holy sire,
What it is that now you say.

Said the abbot, "See this parchment,
Though the spelling is not good,
It secures the house of Elverslie
From the spoiler, Robin Hood.

"'And all for Willie o' Wyburn's sake,'—
'Tis written, as thou mayst see,—
'Sith he is a clerk of great renown,
And hath claimed this boon of me.'

"'Tis all indited on goodly skin,
And sealed with a seal secure;
And all men know, though an outlaw,
That he will keep it sure.

"Now, ask such boon as may thee list;
And God will give thee grace
To ask aright, sith thee he chose
To save his holy place."

Willie looked down, and wiped away
A falling tear with his hand;
And, "This," said he, "is of God's good grace,
And more than I understand.

"I owe to the house of Elverslie
Far more than I can repay;
'Twas some good saint, not words of mine,
That moved him yesterday."

But, "The boon! the boon!" they all gan cry;
And the harper 'mong them all,
For joy he scarce could keep him still,
So loud as he did call.

"The boon! the boon!" the abbot said,
"Now name a boon, my son;
And whate'er thy asking, by the rood,
It surely shall be done!"

Willie looked up with his pale face,
And, "Blessed be God!" said he;

"Give unto me the lodge in the wood
That looketh over the lea.

"In the lodge in the wood lives no one now,
And it stands this house anear;
It brought to the coffers of Elverslie
But seven marks by the year.

"My mother she loves that forest-lodge;
She there was born and bred,
And there the white does used to come
To my grandsire to be fed."

"'Tis thine! 'tis thine!" said the abbot,
"'Tis thine for evermore!
With seven good acres of the lea,
And of forest-land a score.

"The tame and the wild within the bounds,
And the fish within the river;
The wood to fell, and the land to plough,
Shall be thine, and thine for ever!"

Some they clapped, and some they stamped,
And some did shout amain;
And, "Well done, abbot of Elverslie!"
Rang o'er and o'er again.

"And, more than this," the abbot went on:
"For that thy rents are small,
I will give thee twenty pounds by the year,
To buy thee books withal."

No answer made Willie o' Wyburn,
No answer but this made he;
"Oh! what will my mother say? but yet,
Non nobis, Domine!"

PART VI.

How Willie o' Wyburn becomes a Man, and is sent for to London.

As Willie o' Wyburn grew a man
More learnëd still was he;
He had more books in his forest-lodge
Than the monks at Elverslie.

Latin he had, and he had Greek,
And wondrous scrolls indeed,
All written over with letters strange
That none but he could read.

And Willie he knew all metals,
And the virtues to them given;
He knew the names of rocks and stones,
And of the stars in heaven.

There were no trees upon the hill,
No flowers within the dell,
But Willie had read and written of them,
And all their names could tell.

He knew what the lightnings were; he knew
How the wingëd winds career;
The nature of sun and moon he knew,
And the changes of the year.

There was no book, however wise,
But he had read it through;

And the darkest things in philosophy
To him were easy too.

But Willie was more than wise, for he
Was meek, and kind, and good;
And the Christian's blessed law of love
He chiefest understood.

He was a brother to the poor,
Their friend beloved, their guide;
And the merry children left their sports,
To wander at his side.

And Willie o' Wyburn's mother,
Oh, who was glad as she!
And who had joy in his learning
Like the monk of Elverslie!

"For thy Latin is pure," the monk he said,
"Thy Greek withouten fault;
Thou art a scholar as good as I,
By whom this lore was taught!"

Now, Willie read, and Willie wrote,
And afar his name was known,
Till the fame of his learning came, at last,
To the king upon his throne.

And he sent for Willie o' Wyburn
All up to London town,
To see if, indeed, his learning
Could equal his renown.

King Henry sate upon his throne,
With his wise men around;
Seven bishops and ten priests there were,
Of learning most profound.

And there the queen sate smiling,
Her fan within her hand;
With twenty fair young ladies,
The noblest in the land.

And all were wondrous merry,
As they stood round about;

For they thought their witty beauty
Would put his learning out,

But when they looked upon him,
With his pale and noble face;
And saw his quick discerning eye,
His youthful, reverend grace;

Straightway their mirth was ended,
Their jesting all was o'er;
And, when he spoke, his lofty speech
Amazëd them the more.

His voice was low and sweetly toned,
Like a bird's song on the bough;
And every bishop at the court
His learning did allow.

"Now, by my faith," King Henry said,
"I ne'er heard learning rare,
I ne'er heard learning in my days,
That might with thine compare.

" I wish, by my soul, this very day,
So wish I, by my fee,
That I was a little child again,
To get my lore from thee!"

He took a chain from off his neck,
And a book that lay by his side,
Saying, " Take thou these, a gift from me,
And the good saints be thy guide!"

The queen took a ring from off her hand,
The fairest ring she wore,
Saying, " Wear thou this, for lore I love
As I ne'er loved it before!"

Upon his knee bent Willie, and took
The ring, the book, the chain,
And said, " By your leave, my lieges,
I'll to my home again."

" Nay," said the king, " thou shalt not go
Without a gift from me,

A gift for thine alma mater,
The house of Elverslie!"

He bade them make a chalice of gold,
The best his smith could make,
And round it was graved, in Latin,
"For William of Wyburn's sake."

And so lived Willie o' Wyburn,
Beloved wherever he came:
His minstrel friend did write this lay
In honour of his name.

The king is great upon his throne,
The canon in his stall;
But a right good man, like Wyburn Willie,
Is greater than they all.

THE YOUNGER SON.

THE younger son to his father spake:
" My home is weary grown;
Give me the portion of thy goods
Will one day be mine own.

" Let me go out into the world;
I long its joys to share;
I long to spend my youthful years
Among the free and fair."

" My son! my son!" the old man said,
With low, prophetic voice,
" Tarry at home in quietness;
Thine is an evil choice.

" Tarry at home in quietness;
I have but children twain,

And ye are dear as is my life!"
—The old man spoke in vain.

Then up he went to his iron chest,
That was locked with an iron key,
And took seven bags of fine red gold,
And three of the white monie.

"And this," he said, "is half my wealth;"
And he took them one by one,
And set them down, a goodly row,
Before his younger son.

"I gained it, boy, without a crime;
I hoarded it for thee;
And as by honest means it came,
So let its spending be."

* * * * *

In the city is a festive stir,
And riot fills the air,

And who, beside the younger son,
Can make such revel there?

A hundred guests go thronging up
A lordly staircase bright;
And that young man, throughout his hall,
Hears dancing feet so musical
Make merry sound all night.

Each day on couches rich he lies,
With gold cloth at his feet;
And dainty meats are carved for him,
When he sits down to eat.

He drinks his wine from a golden cup;
With a free hand spends his store;
Thou prodigal, be warned in time,
Thy seven bags are but four!

* * * * *

There are one and twenty gentlemen
Around the table sitting:

Ah, younger son! dare not that throw;
Each villain doth his business know,
And it is thy outwitting.

He has thrown the dice, he has lost the game!
And now he sits apart,
With burning anger on his brow,
And madness in his heart.

He lifts the wine-cup to his lips,
A fevered man is he;
He drains it, and he filleth still,
And drinketh desperately!

* * * * *

"Ho, fellow!" saith the midnight watch,
Within the city street;
"Whence comest at this late hour?" they ask
Of one they nightly meet.

'Tis he, 'tis he, the younger son,
How changed in mood and frame!

And now he leads a sinful life,
A sinful life of shame.

And he hath spent the seven bags,
That were filled up to the brim;
And the three alone of white money
Are only left to him.

Well, younger son, since so it is,
Thine evil ways amend;
And, where thou spent a thousand pounds,
A penny thou now must spend.

Thy years are few, and thou art strong;
Come, yield not to dismay!—
Thou fool!—hast with a madman's hand
Thy *last* mite thrown away?

Now God have mercy on thy need!
With man is little grace;
For they, with whom thou spent thy gold,
Will mock thee to thy face.

He heard the laugh, as he went by;
He saw them turn aside,
As from a creature pestilent;
And in each place, where'er he went,
He met the taunt of pride.

They would not give, they would not lend;
They mocked him one and all;
Then passed he through the city gate,
And laid him down, as day grew late,
Without the city wall.

* * * * *

Now, younger son, can this be thou?
Dost herd among the swine?
Thine eyes are meek, thy brow is pale,
An altered heart is thine.

And thou hast bowed to solemn thoughts
That through thy spirit ran,
As in the wilds thou sat'st apart,
A solitary man.

Ay, prodigal, sweet tears are these;
And this stripped heart is sent
By God, in token of his grace:
Look up, poor penitent!

Bethink thee of thy father's house,
Heaven's holy peace is there:
The very servants of that place
Have bread enough to spare.

Up, thou dost perish in this wild!
And there is one doth keep
Watch for thee with a yearning love,
A memory fond and deep.

— The younger son rose up, and went
Unto his native place;
And bowed, a meek, repentant man,
Before his father's face.

1829.

THE VOYAGE WITH THE NAUTILUS.

I MADE myself a little boat,
As trim as trim could be;
I made it of a great pearl shell
Found in the Indian Sea.

I made my masts of wild sea-rush
That grew on a secret shore,
And the scarlet plume of the halcyon
Was the pleasant flag I bore.

For my sails I took the butterfly's wings;
For my ropes the spider's line;
And that mariner old, the Nautilus,
To steer me over the brine.

For he had sailed six thousand years,
And knew each isle and bay;

And I thought that we, in my little boat,
Could merrily steer away.

The stores I took were plentiful:
The dew as it sweetly fell;
And the honey that was hoarded up
In the wild bee's summer cell.

"Now steer away, thou helmsman good,
Over the waters free;
To the charmëd Isle of the Seven Kings,
That lies in the midmost sea."

He spread the sail, he took the helm;
And, long ere ever I wist,
We had sailed a league, we had reached the isle
That lay in the golden mist.

The charmëd Isle of the Seven Kings,
'T is a place of wondrous spell;
And all that happed unto me there
In a printed book I 'll tell.

Said I, one day, to the Nautilus,
As we stood on the strand,
" Unmoor my ship, thou helmsman good,
And steer me back to land;

" For my mother, I know, is sick at heart,
And longs my face to see.
What ails thee now, thou Nautilus?
Art slow to sail with me?
Up! do my will; the wind is fresh,
So set the vessel free."

He turned the helm; away we sailed
Towards the setting sun:
The flying-fish were swift of wing,
But we outsped each one.

And on we went for seven days,
Seven days without a night;
We followed the sun still on and on,
In the glow of his setting light.

Down and down went the setting sun,
And down and down went we;
'Twas a splendid sail for seven days
On a smooth descending sea.

On a smooth, descending sea we sailed,
Nor breeze the water curled:
My brain grew sick, for I saw we sailed
On the down-hill of the world.

"Good friend," said I to the Nautilus,
"Can this the right course be?
And shall we come again to land?"
But answer none made he;
And I saw a laugh in his fishy eye,
As he turned it up to me.

So on we went; but soon I heard
A sound as when winds blow,
And waters wild are tumbled down
Into a gulf below.

And on and on flew the little bark,
As a fiend her course did urge;
And I saw, in a moment, we must hang
Upon the ocean's verge.

I snatched down the sails, I snapped the ropes,
I broke the masts in twain;
But on flew the bark and 'gainst the rocks,
Like a living thing did strain.

"Thou'st steered us wrong, thou helmsman vile!"
Said I to the Nautilus bold;
"We shall down the gulf; we're dead men both!
Dost know the course we hold?"

I seized the helm with a sudden jerk,
And we wheeled round like a bird;
But I saw the Gulf of Eternity,
And the tideless waves I heard.

"Good master," said the Nautilus,
"I thought you might desire

To have some wondrous thing to tell
Beside your mother's fire.

"What's sailing on a summer sea?
As well sail on a pool;
Oh, but I know a thousand things
That are wild and beautiful!

"And if you wish to see them now,
You've but to say the word."
"Have done!" said I to the Nautilus,
"Or I'll throw thee overboard.

"Have done!" said I, "thou mariner old,
And steer me back to land."
No other word spake the Nautilus,
But took the helm in hand.

I looked up to the lady moon,
She was like a glow-worm's spark;
And never a star shone down to us
Through the sky so high and dark.

We had no mast, we had no ropes,
And every sail was rent;
And the stores I brought from the charmëd isle
In the seven days' sail were spent.

But the Nautilus was a patient thing,
And steered with all his might
On the up-hill sea; and he never slept,
But kept the course aright.

And for thrice seven nights we sailed and sailed;
At length I saw the bay
Where I built my ship, and my mother's house
'Mid the green hills where it lay.

"Farewell!" said I to the Nautilus,
And leaped upon the shore;
"Thou art a skilful mariner,
But I'll sail with thee no more!"

DIVES AND LAZARUS.

DIVES put on his purple robes, and linen white and fine,
With costly jewels on his hands, and sate him down to dine.
In a crimson chair of state he sate, and cushions many a one
Were ranged around, and on the floor, to set his feet upon.
There were dishes of the wild fowl, and dishes of the tame,
And flesh of kine, and curious meats, that on the table came;
From plates of ruddy gold he ate, with forks of silver fine;
And drank from out a crystal cup the bright and foaming wine.
Behind him stood his serving-men, as silent as might be,
To wait upon him while he dined amid his luxury.

Now Lazarus was a beggar, a cripple weak and grey;
A childless man, too old to work, who begged beside the way;
And as he went along the road great pain on him was laid,
So on a stone he sate him down, and unto God he prayed.
'Twas in the dreary winter, and on a stone he sate,
A weary, miserable man, at Dives' palace gate.

There many servants out and in were passing to and fro,
And Lazarus prayed, for love of God, some mercy they would show;
And that the small crumbs might be his that fell upon the floor,
Or he must die for lack of food beside that palace door.

Now Dives on a silken bed in sumptuous ease was laid,
And soft-toned lutes and dulcimers a drowsy music made;
But he heard the voice of Lazarus low-wailing where he lay,
And he said unto his serving-men, "Yon beggar drive away!"
"He is old," said one; another spake, "He's lame, and cannot go."
Said a third, "He craveth for the crumbs that lie the board below."
"It matters not!" said Dives; "go, take my blood-hounds grim,
Go, take them from their kennels, and set them upon him;
And hunt him from the gate away, for while he thus doth moan
I cannot get a wink of sleep." And so the thing was done.
But when they saw the poor old man who not a word did say,
The very dogs had pity on him, and licked him where he lay;
And in the middle of the night, sore smit with want and pain,
On the frosty earth he laid him down ne'er to rise up again.
And Dives likewise laid him down on a bed of soft delight,
Rich silver lamps were burning dim in his chamber through the night;

But a ghostly form stole softly in, and the curtains drew aside,
And laid his hand on Dives' heart; and Dives likewise died.

Then burning guilt, like heavy lead, upon his soul was laid,
And down and down, yet lower and lower, to the lowest depth of shade
Went the soul of wicked Dives, like a rock into the sea,
To the depths of woe, where troubled souls bewail their misery.
His eyes he wildly opened in a gulf of flaming levin,
And afar he saw, so green and cool, the pleasant land of heaven;
A broad, clear river went winding there, and trees grew on its brim;
There stood the beggar Lazarus, and Abraham talked with him.
"Oh! father," then said Dives, "let Lazarus come along,
And bring one drop of water to cool my burning tongue,
For there is torment in this flame, which burneth evermore."
Said Abraham, "Dives, think upon the days that now are o'er:
Thou hadst thy comfortable things, water, and food, and wine;
Didst deck thyself in costly robes, purple and linen fine;
Yet was thy heart an evil heart amid thy pomp and gold,
And Lazarus sate before thy gate, despised, and poor, and old;
A beggar whom thy dogs did hunt, and whom thou didst revile,
Wretched and weak, yet praising God with thankful heart the while.

Now in the blooming land of heaven great comfort doth he know,
And thou must lie 'mid torment, in the burning seas below.
Beside all this, there is a gulf that lieth us between,
A boundless gulf o'er which the wing of angel ne'er hath been."
So Dives saw them pass away from the clear river's shore,
And angels many, on snowy wings, the beggar Lazarus bore.

1829.

A FOREST SCENE,

IN THE DAYS OF WICKLIFFE.

A LITTLE child, she read a book
  Beside an open door;
And, as she read page after page,
  She wondered more and more.

Her little finger carefully
  Went pointing out the place;
Her golden locks hung drooping down,
  And shadowed half her face.

The open book lay on her knee,
  Her eyes on it were bent;
And, as she read page after page,
  Her colour came and went.

She sate upon a mossy stone,
An open door beside;
And round for miles on every hand
Stretched out a forest wide.

The summer sun shone on the trees,
The deer lay in the shade;
And overhead the singing birds
Their pleasant clamour made.

There was no garden round the house,
And it was low and small;
The forest sward grew to the door,
And lichens on the wall.

There was no garden round about,
Yet flowers were growing free,
The cowslip and the daffodil,
Upon the forest-lea.

The butterfly went flitting by,
The bees were in the flowers;

But the little child sate steadfastly,
As she had sate for hours.

"Why sit you here, my little maid?"
An aged pilgrim spake;
The child looked upward from her book,
Like one but just awake.

Back fell her locks of golden hair,
And solemn was her look,
As thus she answered witlessly,
"Oh! sir, I read this book."

"And what is there within that book
To win a child like thee?
Up! join thy mates, the merry birds,
And frolic with the bee."

"Nay, sir, I cannot leave this book,
I love it more than play;
I have read all legends, but this one
Ne'er saw I till this day.

"And there is something in this book
That makes all care be gone;
And yet I weep, I know not why,
As I go reading on."

"Who art thou, child, that thou shouldst con
A book with mickle heed?
Books are for clerks; the king himself
Hath much ado to read."

"My father is a forester,
A bowman keen and good;
He keeps the deer within their bound,
And worketh in the wood.

"My mother died at Candlemas:
The flowers are all in blow
Upon her grave at Allonby,
Down in the dale below."

This said, unto her book she turned,
As steadfast as before;

" Nay," said the pilgrim, " nay not yet;
And you must tell me more.

" Who was it taught you thus to read?"
" Ah! sir, it was my mother:
She taught me both to read and spell,
And so she taught my brother.

" My brother dwells at Allonby
With the good monks alway;
And this new book he brought to me, —
But only for one day.

" Oh! sir, it is a wondrous book,
Better than Charlemagne;
And, be you pleased to leave me now,
I'll read in it again."

" Nay, read to me," the pilgrim said;
And the little child went on
To read of CHRIST, as was set forth
In the Gospel of St. John.

On, on she read, and gentle tears
Adown her cheeks did slide;
The pilgrim sate, with bended head,
And he wept at her side.

"I've heard," said he, "the archbishop,
I've heard the pope at Rome;
But never did their spoken words
Thus to my spirit come.

"The book it is a blessed book;
Its name, what may it be?"
Said she, "They are the words of CHRIST
That I have read to thee,
Now done into the English tongue
For folk unlearned as we."

"Sancta Maria!" said the man,
"Our canons have decreed
That this is an unholy book
For simple folk to read!

"Sancta Maria! blessed be God!
Had this good book been mine,
I need not have gone on pilgrimage
To holy Palestine.

"Give me the book, and let me read;
My soul is strangely stirred;
They are such words of love and truth
As ne'er before I heard."

The little girl gave up the book;
And the pilgrim, old and brown,
With reverent lips did kiss the page,
Then on the stone sate down.

And on he read, page after page;
Page after page he turned;
And, as he read their blessed words,
His heart within him burned.

Still, still the book the old man read,
As he would ne'er have done;

From the hour of noon he read the book
Unto the set of sun.

The little child she brought him out
A cake of wheaten bread,
But it lay unbroke at eventide;
Nor did he raise his head,
Until he every written page
Within the book had read.

Then came the sturdy forester
Along the homeward track;
Whistling aloud a hunting tune,
With a slain deer on his back.

Loud greeting gave the forester
Unto the pilgrim poor;
The old man rose, with thoughtful brow,
And entered at the door.

The two they sate them down to meat;
And the pilgrim 'gan to tell

How he had eaten on Olivet,
And drunk at Jacob's well.

And then he told how he had knelt
Where'er our Lord had prayed;
How he had in the garden been,
And the tomb where he was laid:

And then he turned unto the book,
And read, in English plain,
How CHRIST had died on Calvary,
How he had risen again;

And all his comfortable words,
His deeds of mercy all,
He read; and of the widow's mite,
And the poor prodigal.

As water to the parched soil,
As to the hungry, bread,
So fell upon the woodman's soul
Each word the pilgrim read.

Thus, through the midnight, did they read
Until the dawn of day;
And then came in the woodman's son
To fetch the book away.

All quick and troubled was his speech,
His face was pale with dread;
"For the king," he said, "had made a law
That the book must not be read;
It was such fearful heresy,
The holy abbot said."

THE BOY OF HEAVEN.

One summer eve, seven little boys
  Were playing at the ball,
Seven little boys so beautiful,
  Beside a castle wall.

And, whilst they played, another came,
  And stood among them there;
A little boy, with gentle eyes
  And thick and curling hair.

The clothes he on his body wore
  Were linen fine and white;
The girdle that was round his waist
  Was like the morning light.

A little while he looked on them,
  Looked lovingly, and smiled,

When unto him the eldest said,
"Whence comest thou, fair child?

"Art thou the son of some great king,
And in a hidden place
Hast been concealed; for until now
I never saw thy face?

"Dost dwell among the lonely hills,
Or in the forest low;
Or dost thou chase the running deer,
A hunter with thy bow?

"And tell us what wild, woodland name
Have they unto thee given?"
"They called me Willie," said he, "on earth;
They call me so in heaven.

"My father with King David dwells,
In the land of heaven dwells he;
And my gentle mother, meek and mild,
Sits at the Virgin's knee.

" Seven years ago to heaven we went;
'T was in the winter chill,
When icy cold the winds did blow,
And mists were on the hill.

" But, when we reached the land of heaven,
'T was like a summer's day;
The skies were blue, and fragrant flowers
All round about us lay.

" The land of heaven is beautiful:
There no cold wind doth blow;
And fairer apples than e'er ye saw
Within its gardens grow.

" I've seen the patriarchs face to face;
The wise of every land;
And with the heavenly little ones
Have wandered, hand in hand,

" Down by the golden streams of life,
All through the forests old,

And o'er the boundless hills of heaven,
The sheep of God's own fold."

Then up and spoke a little boy,
The youngest of the seven:
"My mother is dead, so let me go
With thee, dear child, to heaven.

"My mother is dead, and my father loves
His dogs far more than me;
No one would miss me if I went:
Oh, let me go with thee!

"No one would miss me if I went;
Dame Bertha loves me not;
And for old crabbed Hildebrand
I do not care a jot."

"Alas!" the heavenly child replied,
"That home thou canst not win,
If thou have an ill word on thy tongue,
Or in thy heart a sin.

"The way is long and wearisome,
Through peril great it lies:
With any sin upon thy soul
From earth thou couldst not rise.

"There are waters deep and wild to pass;
And who hath a load of sin,
Like the heavy rock that will not float,
Is tumbled headlong in.

"There are red and raging fires to pass;
And like the iron stone
Is sin; red-hot as a burning share,
It scorcheth to the bone.

"Darest go with me? Wilt try the path,
Now thou its pain dost know?"
The motherless boy turned round and wept,
And said, "I dare not go."

The boy of heaven to a chamber came
Ere rosy day was peeping,

And marveled if his sister 't were
Who on the ground lay sleeping.

She used to have a bed of down,
And silken curtains bright;
But he knew her by her dainty foot,
And little hand so white;

He knew her by the long fair hair
That on her shoulders lay,
Though the pleasant things about the room
Were taken all away.

And "Oh!" sighed he, "my sister dear,
Art thou left all alone?"
Just then she spoke in troubled dreams,
And made a gentle moan.

"They have ta'en from me my bed of down,
And given me straw instead;
They have ta'en from me the wheaten cakes,
And given me barley bread.

"The pearls which my dear mother wore
They have ta'en from me away,
And the little book with silver clasps
Wherefrom I learned to pray.

"My heart is grown as heavy as lead,
And pale and thin my cheek;
I sit in corners of the house,
And hardly dare to speak.

"For they are stern, and love me not;
No gentle hearts are here.
I wish I were in heaven above,
With my own brother dear!"

Then Willie bent down unto the ground,
And knelt upon his knee;
He breathed heaven's breath upon her lips,
And gave her kisses three.

And tenderly he looked on her,
And yet he looked not long,

Ere he spoke three words into her ear,
Three awful words and strong.

Then Annie rose from her bed of straw
A joyful angel bright,
And the chamber late so dark and drear
Was full of heavenly light.

Amazed she looked one moment's space,
One moment made a stand;
But she knew it all in a moment more,
And away to the heavenly land,
Like the morning lark when it rises up,
Went they two hand in hand.

1830.

THE FOREST LORD.

A Minstrel's Tale for a Christmas Night.

Now listen, all ye children dear,
To the tale that I shall tell,
A gentle tale of wondrous things
That once in France befell.

PART I.

THE BROTHER AND SISTER.

THE brother to the sister spake:
"There are none who for us care,
Let us go out into the world,
And seek our fortunes there.

"The world is large, I've heard them say,
And wide as it can be;

There must be room, my sister dear,
In it for thee and me."

The sister to the brother spake:
"Oh! brother dear," she cried,
"We ne'er have known a happy day
Since our sweet mother died.

"Our father lies within the wood,
Beneath the elmen five:—
'T was a noble life we led i' th' wood
When our father was alive.

"Our mother lies beneath the sod,
All under the white-rose tree;
And in all the world there 's never a one
To care for thee and me."

Now they have neither house nor land,
Nor gold nor silver fair;
And none will give a single groat
Unto the lonely pair.

Said one: "Your father lived i' th' wood,
He was a hunter wild;
He shot the deer the while I delved:
I shall not feed his child."

Said one: "Your mother pinned her hair
All with a golden pin;
I wore a curch of linen-cloth;
You nought from me shall win."

All angry grew the brother's soul,
But never a word he said;
He took his sister by the hand,
And to the wood they sped.

And many and many a day they went
Throughout the lonesome wood;
And there were none to pity them,
Or give them counsel good.

There was no house that sheltered them,
No kindly hand that fed;

They ate the forest berries crude,
Green mosses were their bed.

And weary, weary grew they both,
As hand in hand they went;
Yet neither to the other told
How they were travel-spent.

At length they saw a noble hart
Fly past them like the wind,
Nor were aware that hunters strong
Were riding up behind.

Said the brother, with a merry laugh,
"I'll kill that noble deer,
And make a fire, as we were wont,
And dress the venison here."

With that he slung a forest stone,
Like a shaft sent from a bow;
The flying deer he made a bound,
Then on the turf lay low.

With that uprose a furious cry
From the hunters fierce and brown;
And each man from his panting steed
Leapt in a moment down.

They seized the brother by the arm,
The sister pale with fear,
And swore that he should die that day
For killing of the deer.

Then with their heavy bows of steel
The noble boy they beat,
And spurned the sister as she knelt
To pray for mercy sweet.

And up they took the bleeding deer
From the greensward where it lay,
Then, springing to their pawing steeds,
They galloped thence away.

PART II.

THE HALL OF THE ELMEN TREES.

Upon a little bed of moss
The brother pale is sleeping;
And o'er him bends his sister dear,
But she has done with weeping.

"He will not die," she whispers low;
"He looks not like our mother,
Nor like our father when he died;
I shall not lose my brother."

And then from off the bushes green,
Within the forest woody,
She gathered berries many a one,
All juicy, ripe, and ruddy,

And honey from the wild-bees' nest,
She knew he loved it dearest,

And roots that had a healing power,
And water of the clearest.

She twined the leafy branches round,
A greenwood chamber making;
Then sate she down among the moss
To wait for his awaking.

All day he slept; but with the eve
He woke and laughed outright,
His cruel pains had left him then,
And he was healëd quite.

"Now," said the little sister dear,
"About this spot we'll bide;
The savage hunters come not here
A-riding in their pride."

Her brother turned him round about,
And, "Sister dear," he said,
"I'll make those savage hunters yet
To stand of me in dread."

He took his sister by the hand,
And on by wood and wave
They went unto the elmen five,
That grew above the grave;

They went unto the white-rose tree
That blossomed all the year,
Then spoke the brother stern and strong
Unto the sister dear.

"Five wands from off the elmen trees,"
And he cut them as he spake,
"Five wands from off the elmen trees
My forest home shall make.

"And a rose from off the white-rose tree,"
And he plucked, the while, a flower,
"One rose from off the white-rose tree
Shall make for thee a bower.

"The duke is lord in Burgundy,
The king o'er France doth reign;

But I'll be lord of the forest wide,
And lead a gallant train."

Then he took his sister by the hand,
And back again did go
Unto the quiet place that lay
Within the forest low.

And the five wands of the elmen trees
He stuck into the ground,
And the leaves from off the white rose
He scattered all around;

And aye they grew, and grew the more,
And a wonder 't was to see
The five dry wands of elmen wood
Each shoot into a tree.

And every leaf of that white rose
It sprang into a flower,
And the flowers all into trees did grow,
And made a lady's bower.

And the five tops of the elmen-trees
He tied into a dome;
"And this," the noble brother spake,
"Shall be our forest home."

PART III.

THE FOREST LORD.

"Now who is he that rules this land?"
A holy hermit cried;
"Who is the lord of this greenwood,
Where I would fain abide?"

"'Tis a noble youth," the people said,
"Who now doth rule the wood;
Thou mayst scoop thy cell, and bless thy well,
For he will do thee good."

"Now who is he that rules this land?"
A peasant-man did cry,
"For our liege lord is stern and bad,
And hither I would fly."

" 'Tis a noble youth," the people spake;
" Thou need'st not be afraid;
For all oppressed and injured men
Fly unto him for aid.

" He hath a band of merry men,
Who under the branches fare;
'Tis a pleasant life that he and his men
Lead in the forest there."

" Now, where is one shall do me right?"
A widow pale, she cried;
" Oh, where is one to take my part
Against a man of pride?"

" Come down with us to the forest green,
Where the elmen tops are twined;
Come down with us," the people cried,
" A champion true to find."

The forest wilderness was cleared,
Was drained the forest fen,

And 'twas joy to see a hamlet rise
Where no man dwelt till then;

To see the women at their doors
Sit spinning in the sun,
And the brawny peasants wrestling
When daily work was done.

'Twas joy to hear the hermit's hymn
Come from his mossy cell,
To see the fearless traveller
Drink at the wayside well.

'Twas joy to hear the happy voice
Of children at their play,
Or the quiet low of peaceful herds
That in the forest stray.

But a greater joy it was to see
The sister's heavenly grace,
Who like an angel cast the light
Of love around the place.

But the greatest joy of all it was,
The noble youth to view,
Who was so just, and wise, and brave,
So steadfast and so true.

The savage hunters feared him sore,
Who were so fierce afore;
For sternly thus he made decree,
"These men shall hunt no more."

"Now go ye down, my fellows brave,
And out these hunters seek;
For I will not that the strong and bad
Shall lord it o'er the weak."

They took those hunters in their den,
Those cruel men of blood;
And trembling, pale, and terrified,
Before the boy they stood.

"We did not know, indeed," said they,
"That thou wouldst be a king;

We did not know, or else, be sure,
We had not done this thing."

The youth's stern brow grew darkly red:
"Now shame upon you fall!"
Said he; "for that ye would misuse
The feeble and the small.

"Ye shall be men of power no more,
Since power ye have abused;
Ye shall be poor, and subject to
The weak whom you misused."

He made them plough the forest brown;
The wood he made them fell;
And for the feeble and the poor
Fetch water from the well.

The duke was lord of Burgundy;
The king o'er France did reign;
But the forest lord was called by all —
A second Charlemagne.

THE THREE GUESTS.

"Oh, where are you, ye three young men?
Where, where on land or sea?
My soul doth daily yearn for you;
Oh, hasten back to me!

"Oh, hasten back, my best beloved,
My gentle, wise, and brave!
Or, be ye numbered with the dead,
Come back e'en from the grave.

"Ay, from the grave, if ye are there,
For once, my lost, come back;
For once — so I may look on you,
May know your mortal track."

With that there blew a loud wind,
With that there blew a low;

The barred door on its hinges turned,
Turned silently and slow,

And in there came the three young men,
From lands that lay not near;
And all as still their footsteps fell
As dews that none can hear.

The first was pale, and cold, and thin,
As the living cannot be:
His robe was of the chill grey mist
That hangeth on the sea.

The second bore upon his brow
A Cain-like sign, severe and grim:
His mother shrieked and crossed herself,
Nor dared to look on him.

The third was as the morning fair,
Breathing forth odour sweet;
A starry crown was on his head,
A rainbow at his feet.

" Where have ye been, ye three young men?"
Outspoke their mother in fear;
" Sit down, sit down on your own hearth,
'T is long since ye were here.

" Sit down, sit down, ye three young men,
Take rest and break my bread:
Ye've travelled far this weary night:—
Woe's me, ye're of the dead!"

" I may not break thy bread, mother,"
The eldest gan to say;
" But I will sit on thy hearth, mother,
And warm me while I may.

" For my bed is in the ocean-ice,
Beyond the northern shore;
There hath come no sunbeam to the place
For seven long years and more.

" And but the last, great judgment-call
Can set my body free;

For the icy sea is my sepulchre,
And winter keeps the key.

"And it is because of evil deeds,
Because of a broken vow,
That my soul is in the dreary place
That holds my body now.

"When I left thy pleasant home, mother,
I took me to the sea,
And stately was the noble ship
That I had built for me.
Her masts were of the northern pine,
Her hull of the oaken tree;

"Her sails were of the canvass stout,
To face the fiercest wind;
Her mariners were bold young men,
The bravest I could find.

"And off we sailed, through rough and smooth,
Off to the Indian Seas;

We captured every ship we met,
And killed their companies.

"Our ship she carried seven ships' store,
From the deck unto the hold;
And all we used within the ship
Was made of beaten gold.

"We had seven ships' freights within our ship,
And heavily she sailed and slow:
She sprang a leak; like lead she sank,
When not a breath did blow.

"I woke as from a frightful dream,
In a bower, I knew not where,
And by me knelt an Indian maid,
Who cooled the burning air;
With a sweet fan of Indian flowers
She cooled the burning air.

"'Twas the kindest maid that ever loved,
A very child in truth;

The meekest, though a king's first-born,
In the glory of her youth.

"She took me to her father's house,
A rich barbaric place;
She won for me, her stranger-mate,
The love of all her race.

"They clothed me as they clothe a king,
They set me next the throne,
And twenty snow-white elephants
They gave me for my own.

"Ah me! how I requited them
It has been told in heaven;
And mortal pangs must cleanse my soul
From that unholy leaven,

"And drearier woe and darker still,
Ere from my soul can fall
The burthen of my broken vows,
The heaviest guilt of all.

" I trampled on her true heart's love;
The Indian stream ran red,
The sacred stream of her own land,
With pure blood which I shed.

" Once more I built myself a boat,
Of the teak-tree's choicest core;
I took seven mariners on board,
And put to sea once more.

" My mast was made of Indian cane,
My sails of silken twine,
My ropes they were the tendrils strong
Pulled from the Indian vine.

" I laded my bark with all the wealth
Which guilt had made mine own;
I took with me, for merchandise,
The pearl and diamond stone.

" 'Twas a heavy freight, a heavy freight,
That lay that bark within;

But the heaviest weight was in my soul,
The load of seven years' sin!

"I ne'er again set foot on land,
It had no port for me;
As Cain was a wanderer on the earth,
So was I on the sea.

"My food was the fish that passed me by;
My drink the gathered rain;
I grew unsightly, dark, and fierce,
A spectre of the main.

"My fame was a terror every where,
Like a spirit of the blast;
And, when a tall ship crossed my track,
Its people looked aghast.

"Thou couldst not have known thy son, mother,
Hadst thou beheld my face,
When, after seven years' voyaging,
I found my resting-place.

" In the North Sea, 'neath the billowy ice
I lie, while time shall be,
To all unknown, save God alone
Who made that grave for me.

" But the first cock crows, I must be gone;
No more have I to tell:
The avenger must not find me thence;
Dear mother, fare thee well!"

The second spake: — " Woe's me for sin!
My elder brother's pain is light;
His place of bondage is the earth,
And there comes day and night.

" I left thy pleasant home, mother,
With thy blessing on my head,
Thy wisest son, as people deemed,
And to the town I sped.

" I lived a life of rioting;
To an ill course was I bent;

The gold my careful father earned,
In wickedness I spent.

" I ran the round of low debauch,
Careless though all might see,
There was no goodness in my soul,
No human dignity.

" There was no kindness in my heart,
Save for one living thing,
A child—'twas strange, that unto me
Aught innocent could cling.

" It was my child, my little son,
That in my heart had place;
One lone affection, that in sin
Made a redeeming trace.

" I loved him, cursed him with my love;
And, if there had been aught
Could save my soul, it had been he;
And yet he saved me not.

" I dragged him with me night and day,
Poor child! through scorn and shame;
I hid him with me in the haunts
Where but the wicked came.

" I never taught him holy things,
Yet was he pure and meek;
And my blood raged, if any dared
To taunt him for my sake.

" I, and two other men like me,
Were bound to do a deed of blood;
In a church of Christ we pledged ourselves
To that dark brotherhood.

" I took the little child with me,
In my affection desperate-hearted;
I bound him in my oath, that we
In any chance might not be parted.

" Nor were we parted: we were cast
Into a horrid dungeon-place;

I could not see my hand at noon,
Nor look upon my loved one's face.

" And yet I felt it mattered not,
While he was with me, where I lay;
Nor had I grieved, but that he pined
For the sweet light of day.

" At length, when many weeks were gone,
And his complainings chafed my blood—
How shall I tell thee!—day by day
Went on, and yet they brought no food.

" I knew man's heart was hard and cold;
I knew that Ugolin was slain
With pangs like these: the sudden thought
Kindled a frenzy in my brain!

" I raved for help; I clasped the child;
I smote my breast, and fiercely cursed;
And, in my madness of despair,
I strove my prison walls to burst.

" My pangs they were not for myself;
I bared my arm, and bade him eat:
Life was a boon I did not prize,
Save for the weak thing at my feet.

" Many days went on, many dreadful days,
And on the dungeon floor at length
I lay, as in a deadly dream;
My rage had spent my strength.

" My utterest, hopeless misery
I knew not for a little space,
Until I felt his trembling hand
Passed lightly o'er my face:

" Then in a changed and feeble tone
I heard him whispering; and he said
A little prayer, 'Father in heaven,
Give us our daily bread!'

"'Where got you, child, that prayer?' I cried;
And he answered with a tranquil air,

'From a little child that went to school,
Oh! father dear, I got that prayer.'

"This was the one pang that I lacked,
The crowning to my misery given;
Wretch that I was! for one so pure
Could only have a place in heaven.

"I thought of all the priest had taught,
And at that time I tried to pray;
But I was not a sinless child,
I could not find a word to say.

"Another frenzy seized my brain,
A twofold madness in me burned;
And which died first I never knew,
For memory ne'er in life returned.

"My doom is not accomplished yet;
But still one thought consoles my heart,
Where'er my blessed child abides,
With me he hath no longer part.

"But, hark! the second cock doth crow;
I feel the freshness of the day;
I hear a call I dare not shun;
Farewell, farewell! I must not stay."

With this the widow clasped her hands,
And "Woe's me!" in her grief she said,
"Woe's me, that I have been a mother!
That I have looked upon the dead!

"My sons! my pride, my sinful boast,
My earliest thought each coming morn,
My latest joy each parting eve,
Would God that ye had ne'er been born!

"Was it for this ye grew in strength?
For this to comely manhood grew?
My loved, my lost!—*my lost!* woe's me!
Oh that I could have died for you!"

"Peace! peace!" the youngest spake, "mother,
And let thy wailing ended be;

If the third cock crow, I must away,
And I am come from heaven for thee.

"They sinned, alas! they darkly sinned,
The angels of bliss shed tears for them;
Their place in heaven is empty yet,
And they have dimmed their diadem.

"But of the end I may not speak,
The purpose of God is never ill;
And though thou mourn, yet murmur not;
Confide in the all-righteous will.

"For me, when I left my pleasant home,
To the city I too sped,
And with the young, for many a year,
An idle life I led.

"We lived with the world's most beautiful;
We raised the wine-cup high;
We crowned ourselves with the summer's rose,
And let no flower pass by.

" We lived in sumptuous palaces,
Death seemed an idle tale;
And to a sweet philosophy
We spread our silken sail.

" I thought not that the loved could die,
Nor that the fair could fade;
And I bound myself with a holy vow
To a young Athenian maid.

" We loved, we lived for seven short years
In a dream of gay delight;
And beautiful young creatures grew,
Like sweet flowers, in our sight.

" I dreamed not that the fair could fade,
Nor that the loved could die;
But the whirlwind came when day was calm,
And swept in fury by.

" My children, those fair, tender things,
Faded like summer snow;

I buried them 'neath a flowery sod,
In a wild amaze of woe.

"I had not seen the pallid face
Of awful death before,
And back I went to my stately house
With new and solemn lore.

"The pestilence had done its work,
The glory of my life was gone,
And my young, sweet Athenian wife
Lay dead before the set of sun.

"I was a man and so I mourned;
And, when they preached philosophy
In my great grief, I drove them forth;
And, tired of life, lay down to die.

"Body and soul they both were weak;
And it was in the city said,
That, like a madman or a fool,
I made my mourning for the dead.

" The young, the happy shunned my door;
I sate alone from morn till night;
And at my lean and drooping form
Men gazed as at a fearful sight.

" At length, by chance, I met a man,
Old and despised, and very poor;
A man of most religious life,
Who yet asked alms from door to door.

" He was my comforter: from him
I learned a faith that saved my soul;
The blessings of the Christian's hope
He gave me, and my mind grew whole.

" I saw that in God's righteous will
I had been smitten, and I bent
My knee at length, and even gave thanks
To him for that great chastisement.

" From that good time I spent my days
Among the afflicted of men's race;

To dungeons and to battle-fields
I passed, a minister of grace.

" The blessings of the Holy One
Went with me to each distant land;
And amid shipwrecks, strife, and foes,
My soul was strengthened by his hand.

" But ere my noon of life was o'er,
The Merciful saw meet to bless
His servant with a peaceful death,
In the far Syrian wilderness.

" Near a small church, that from the days
Of the apostles had stood pure;
Among their dead they laid my bones,
With all old rites of sepulture.

" But, hark! the third cock crows aloud;
Mother, thy race is well nigh run,
The palm in heaven grows green for thee,
Farewell! we meet at set of sun."

1830.

THE COUNTESS LAMBERTI.

SHE still was young; but guilt and tears
Had done on her the work of years.
In a lone house of penitence
She dwelt; and, saving unto one,
A sorrowing woman meek and kind,
Words spake she unto none.

It was about the close of May,
When they two sate apart
In the warm light of parting day,
That she unsealed her burdened heart.

"They married me when I was young,
A very child in years;
They married me at the dagger's point,
Amid my prayers and tears.

" To Count Lamberti I was wed,
He to the pope was brother,
They made me pledge my faith to him
The while I loved another:
Ay, while I loved to such excess,
My love than madness scarce was less!

" I would have died for him, and he
Loved me with equal warmth and truth.
Lamberti's age was thrice mine own,
And he had long outlived his youth.

" His brow was scarred by many wounds;
His eye was stern, and cold, and grave;
He was a soldier from his youth,
And all confessed him brave;
He had been much in foreign lands,
And once among the Moors a slave.

" I thought of him like Charlemagne,
Or any knight of old:

When I was a child upon the knee
His deeds to me they told.

" I knew the songs they made of him,
I sang them when a child:
Giuseppe sang them too with me,
He loved all tales of peril wild.

" I tell thee, he was stern and grey;
His years were thrice mine own.
That I was to Giuseppe pledged,
To all my kin was known.

" My heart was to Giuseppe vowed;
Love was our childhood's lot;
I loved him ever; never knew
The time I loved him not.

" He was an orphan, and the last
Of a long line of pride:
My father took him for his son;
He was to us allied.

" And he within our house was bred,
From the same books in youth we read,
Our teachers were the same; and he
Was as a brother unto me;
A brother! — no, I never knew
How warm a brother's love might be;
But dearer every year he grew.

" Love was our earliest, only life;
Twin forms that had one heart
Were we, and for each other lived,
And never thought to part.

" My father had him trained for war;
He went to Naples, where he fought:
And then the Count Lamberti came,
And me in marriage sought;
He from my father asked my hand,
And I knew nought of what they planned.

" I was no party in the thing.
Why he was ever at my side

I knew not; nor why, when we rode,
My father bade me with him ride.

" No, no! And when Lamberti spoke
Of love, I misbelieving heard;
And strangely gazed into his face,
Appalled at every word.

" It seemed to me as if there fell
From some old saint a tone of hell;
As if that hero heart of pride,
Which my Giusepp' had sanctified
Among the heroes of old time,
Before me blackened stood with crime.

" That night my father sought my room,
And, furious betwixt rage and pride,
He bade me on an early day
Prepare to be Lamberti's bride.

" I thought my father too was mad,
Yet silently I let him speak;

I had no power for word or sign,
I felt the blood forsake my cheek.

" And my heart beat with desperate pain,
The sting of rage was at its core;
There was a tumult in my brain,
And I fell senseless on the floor.

" At length, upon my knees, I prayed
My father to regard the vow
Which to Giuseppe I had made.
Oh Heaven! his furious brow,
His curling lip of sneering scorn,
Like fiends they haunt me now.

" Ay, spite my vows, they made me wed,
Young as I was in years;
At the dagger's point they married me,
Amid my prayers and tears.

" Our palace was at Tivoli,
An ancient place of Roman pride,

Girt round with a sepulchral wood,
Wherein a ruined temple stood;
And there, whilst I was yet a bride,
I saw Giuseppe at my side.

"My own Giuseppe! He had come
From Naples with a noble train;
He came to claim me for his wife:
Would God we ne'er had met again!

"Lamberti's speech still harsher grew,
And darker still his spirit's gloom;
At length, all suddenly, one day
He hurried me to Rome.

"I had a dream, three times it came:
I saw as plainly as by day
A horrid thing, the bloody place
Where young Giuseppe lay.

"I saw them in that ancient wood;
I heard him wildly call on God;

I saw him stabbed; I saw him dead
Upon the bloody sod.

" I knew the murderers, they were two;
I saw them with my sleeping eye;
I knew their voices stern and grim;
I saw them plainly murder him
In the old wood at Tivoli.
Three times the dream was sent to me,
It could not be a lie.

" I knew it could not be a lie;
I knew his precious blood was spilt;
I saw the murderer day by day
Dwell calmly in his guilt.

" No wonder that a frenzy came;
At midnight from my bed I leapt,
I snatched a dagger in my rage,
I stabbed him as he slept.

" I say, I stabbed him as he slept.
It was a horrid deed of blood;

But then I knew that he had slain
Giuseppe in the wood.

" I told my father of my dream;
I watched him every word I spake;
He tried to laugh my dream to scorn,
And yet I saw his body quake.

" They fetched Giuseppe from the wood,
And a great funeral feast they had;
They buried Count Lamberti too,
And said that I was mad.

" I was not mad, and yet I bore
A curse that was no less;
And many, many years went on
Of gloomy wretchedness.

" I saw my father, how he grew
An old man ere his prime;
I knew the secret penance-pain
He bore for that accursëd crime.

" I too, there is a weight of sin
Upon my soul, — it will not hence:
'Tis therefore that my life is given
To one long penitence."

1829.

CARLOVAN.

PART I.

A LOWLY child was Carlovan, a child of ten years old;
His eye was dark and thoughtful, his spirit kind and bold.
No wealth had he, young Carlovan, save his father's book of prayer,
And the golden ring, of little worth, which his dead mother ware.
He had no home, young Carlovan, an orphan child was he;
And yet no rich man said to him, "Come, be a son to me."
There was no one to counsel him, no friend to hear his moan;
And Carlovan rose up and went into the world alone.

"For the love of God," said Carlovan, to a rich priest whom
he met,
"Give me an alms, for it is night, and I am fasting yet!"
The haughty priest looked down on him, with hard, unpitying eye,
The haughty priest went on his way and made him no reply.
For seven days on went Carlovan, through the wild wood and
the clear,
And at night he laid him down to rest among the herded deer.

Upon the eighth young Carlovan saw, riding by the way,
A warrior on an armëd steed, in glittering, proud array.
A prayer sprang ready to his lips, and forth he stretched his hand,
But then he knew that man of blood, the spoiler of his land;
And to his dark and thoughtful eye the human tears did start,
He turned without a word away, and sadder grew his heart.
Then at a peasant's lowly door he made his humble prayer;
But the peasant swore with bitter words that he had nought to spare.
Next at a castle's gate he prayed, where a hundred vassals wait;
But they called him thief and beggar loon, and drove him from the gate.

A heavy heart had Carlovan, and the tears were in his eye;
Up to the green hill-top he went, and laid him down to die.
But first he prayed a holy prayer, to purify his mind,
And wished some blessëd company might take him from mankind.
With an earnest heart prayed Carlovan; and, when his prayer was said,
The fair round moon came up the sky, the stars paled overhead,
And he heard beneath the green hill-top a low sad voice that said,
"Oh, I have not a book to read, not a page whereon to pore;
I have read all these from first to last, and there are now no more!"

"Whoever thou art," said Carlovan, "to me thy footsteps bend:
I have a book of goodly lore which I to thee will lend."
With that up stepped a little old man, of mild, sagacious look,
And bending forth, with eager haste, he seized upon the book.
"Now thank thee, child, for this new book," the old man gravely said,
"And may each blessing in this book be showered upon thy head!"

Again by himself sits Carlovan on the green hill-top so lone,
The night-wind stirred the long grey moss on many an ancient stone.
The driving clouds came up the sky, the yellow moon grew pale,
And just below the lonesome hill he heard a feeble wail.
"Oh! she is gone!" it said, "is gone! we may not her regain;
She must the woes of life endure, must suffer mortal pain;
Nought but a Christian mother's ring can bring her back again!"
"Whoe'er ye be," cried Carlovan, "here let your footsteps wend,
I have my Christian mother's ring, which I to you will lend."
With that he saw, all round the hill, come thronging shapes of light,
More radiant than the opening flowers, or than the day more bright.
They were not creatures of the earth, too fair for human clay;
As angels they were beautiful, yet had not wings as they.

" Now thank thee, thank thee, for thy ring," they cried with voices mild,
And gently raised him by the hand, and stroked his hair, and smiled.
" We will repay thee, child," they said: "now, follow where we go."
And they led him to a far-off place, but where he did not know.
It was no place upon the earth, nor was it in the air;
Some far-off place of happiness, and yet they soon were there.
They made him eat of wheaten cakes, of fruits delicious, seven;
And as he ate and drank he thought that he had passed to heaven.
They bathed him in a silver bath of water cool and sweet;
They poured rich odour on his hair, and dews upon his feet;
They laid him on a silken bed of down so soft and deep;
And dreams that were like paradise kept with him in his sleep.

PART II.

How long he dwelt in that fair place is not for me to say,
But the time went on in happiness as the passing of a day.
By the old man's side sits Carlovan, and on a book doth pore;
" All books," the old man said, " can teach, some less and others more;
" But this book which I had from thee contains the soothest lore.
I can teach nought, my Carlovan, which here thou wilt not find;

All doctrine of sublimest faith is here, to fit thy mind
For conquest over self and sin, for service of thy kind!"
Then opened he the page which told how Christ high heaven forsook,
And for the sake of human sin a human semblance took;
And how he lived and how he died, he read from out the book.
"Nought higher can I teach than this," said he, the old man hoar,
"And the book which thou to me didst lend to thee I now restore.
Go forth a champion for God's poor; be strong, and bear in thought
That wisdom's choicest, noblest lore is by affliction taught.
They put on him the golden ring, and the simple Carlovan
No longer is a little child, but a tall and fair young man. [fear,
"Thanks for thy ring," they said; "and now go forth and have no
Thou hast a better wealth than gold, which never thief comes near;
The uses of adversity have kept thy spirit clear."
They gave him gifts of highest price, an upright heart of truth,
The wisdom of the wisest age with the ardency of youth.

He stood once more on the green hill-top, upon a morning bright,
And many a year and more had passed, though it seemed but yesternight.
Now, who is brave like Carlovan, who brave like him and good?
He hath redeemed the groaning land from that fierce man of blood.

"Thou shalt be king, brave Carlovan, who art so bold and true."
But he put the proffered crown aside, and to the hill withdrew:
And there, among the mossy stones, he knelt awhile apart,
And with his God communed in prayer, and with his upright heart.
"I may not be your king," he said, "for this I was not sent;
There is another work for me, a nobler government."
Now, who is wise like Carlovan? A learnëd man is he;
And they marvel whence he got his lore without a priest's degree.
And far and wide throughout the land good Carlovan doth go,
To preach the love of Jesus Christ both unto high and low.
The haughty priest bowed down to him who scorned him so before,
And from the life of Carlovan learnt humbler, better lore.
He blessed the poor, he felt for them who had been poor as they;
And the land that once was desolate like Eden round him lay.
All loved him as a long-tried friend; all blessed the life he led;
And little children left their play to hear the words he said.
Through long long years lived Carlovan, uncaught by worldly snare;
But ever was the lone hill-top his favourite place of prayer.
And when he died they buried him beneath the hill-top stone.
Please God, a second Carlovan upon the earth were known!

1838.

THE SIN OF EARL WALTER.

PART I.

One summer day, in time of peace,
With a hundred men at his side,
Earl Walter rode to a holy house,
Where the gate stood open wide.

They raised a shout as they entered in,
They laughed and loudly sung,
Till the silent courts of the holy house
With the lawless revel rung.

They turned out the mules from the stables warm,
They laughed at many a jest,
As they fed their steeds with the provender
Which the holy priest had blessed.

They entered the hall with mailëd feet;
And a wild, discordant din
Came to the ear of the abbess old,
As those ruffians entered in.

By an evil chance, it happed, that morn,
That the aged priest had gone,
To meet the prior, at break of day,
In the town of Abingdon;
And the holy house had no defence,
And the nuns were all alone.

In pallid fear they hid themselves,
When they saw the earl was there;
For they knew he was a robber rude
Who any deed would dare,
Because the king, a thriftless man,
Had of the pillage share.

They hid themselves where'er they might,
In chests and chimneys too,

All but the abbess brave, who staid
To note what would ensue.

She heard them pile on the mighty logs,
And blow up a plenteous fire;
And she wished that she might see each one
In brimstone flame expire.

From the larder she heard them fetch each dish
Whereon she loved to dine,
And set on the table fowl and fish,
The venison and the chine;
And she wished the venom of toads and asps
Had savoured those meats so fine.

She heard them fetch up the good old wine,
She heard them pour it out,
And she heard how the cups of good old wine
Went circling round about.

She heard them pledge Earl Walter's name,
As louder mirth begun;

And she wished there were poison in the cup,
To poison them every one.

She heard Earl Walter bid his men
Go search where the wealth was stored,
And bring in the chalice and candlesticks
To grace that banquet board.

She heard them bring in the candlesticks,
And set them all in a row,
And set down the chalice of good red gold,
And the golden plates also;
And she prayed to the saints, that this sacrilege
Might hasten his overthrow.

She heard them pour unholy wine
Into the holy cup,
Then pledge the nuns of our Lady's shrine,
Before they drank it up;

And next she heard them name her name,
While drunken oaths they sware:

The angry woman had heard enough
Of their ill-doings there.

The abbess was withered, old, and lean,
Her hand was bony and thin,
And she waved it o'er her palsied head,
As the hall she entered in.

Earl Walter he was a bold young man,
As brave as man could be,
But he looked aghast a moment's space,
And so did his company.

"Thou hast done a deed, base earl," she said,
"And the king, thy master, too,
An evil deed which the judgment-day
Will sorely make ye rue."

Earl Walter anon regained his mood,
And took up a cup of wine,
Saying, "I' troth there were goodly things
In this old house of thine."

Saying, "'T were a sin, thou lady fair,
If the nuns be fair like thee,
That ye never before this day were seen
Of me and my company."

"Thou heathen dog!" said the abbess then,
"Thou shalt rue that ever we met;
For the lip that never spake curse in vain,
On thee a curse shall set."

Then she banned him here and banned him there,
Wherever his foot should stray;
And on him and all who sprung from him
An awful curse did lay.

And, lastly, said she: "I curse this man
In the field; at the bridal feast;
And death and dishonour shall be with him,
When he wots of them the least.

"All that he loves shall pass from him,
The young, the kind, the brave;

And old — the last of all his race
Shall he go down to the grave."

PART II.

EARL WALTER went to the battle-field,
But sickness laid him low;
And every knight had won him fame
Ere he had struck a blow.

Earl Walter wedded the fairest dame
In all the kingdom wide;
She bore him a son and daughters three,
And then she drooped and died.

His son was a fierce and desperate man,
And died a death of shame:
The sorest woe Earl Walter knew
Was the blot upon his name.

His daughters all were beautiful,
Their souls were pure and true,

Earl Walter wept when he looked on them,
And his sin did deeply rue.

The first, she wedded an aged lord,
A cankered soul had he,
Though rich in land, and rich in gold,
And noble of pedigree.

But hard was that young lady's fate,
Yet she told her grief to none,
But drooped and died of silent woe,
Ere the first twelve months were gone.

The second, she loved a gentleman
Below her own degree,
A brave man, though not a golden piece
Nor a rood of land had he.

"Thou shalt not wed thee to my shame,"
Said the true young knight and bold;
"I will cross the sea and gain me fame,
Shall serve instead of gold.

"I will bring me back a noble name,
Shall serve instead of land;
Then, from thy proud sire, will I claim
Thy fair and gentle hand."

He crossed the sea and he won him fame
By his good broad sword and lance;
He won him fame, but he lost his life
In the bloody fields of France.

Woe, woe to the gentle Isabel,
That she lived to see the day!
For the tidings came like the lightning's stroke,
And her senses went away.

For many weary months she lived
A mournful, moping thing;
Oft sitting 'neath the forest trees,
Or by some sylvan spring;

And singing of the wars of France,
And of the gallant men

Who, fighting for their ladies' sakes,
Would soon come back again.

And never did her sense return,
Until the day she died;
When her young sister Margaret
Sate singing by her side.

Then, gazing with her thoughtful eyes,
Her slumbering senses woke;
And she died in Christ, the purest heart
That ever true love broke.

Three years went on, and then a knight
Sought gentle Margaret's hand;
A knight renowned for gallant deeds,
And rich in gold and land.

He loved fair Margaret in the halls,
He loved her in the bower;
And their young ardent passion grew,
As grows the summer flower.

All gazed on them with joy and pride;
He brave as she was fair;
Again Earl Walter's soul was glad
In looking on that pair.

But, when the bridal morn was come,
Dim grew each look of pride;
And musing went the wedding guests,
And strove their thoughts to hide.

For some had dreamed a dismal dream,
Some seen a fearful sign,
Betokening that the bridal bread
Was baked for funeral wine.

'T was in the cheerful month of May,
White was the flowering thorn,
And every sunny slope was green
With young blades of the corn,
When the feast was set, and the guests were met,
Upon the marriage morn.

"Sweet Margaret, haste!" the bridegroom said,
"In the hall thy maidens stand;
The priest is at the altar now,
And the book is in his hand."

Fair Margaret yet in her chamber sate,
Before her mirror fair,
Alone, save for the aged nurse,
Who stood behind her chair.

And aye she combed her long, dark hair,
And laid the graceful curls,
And braided 'mong the drooping locks
White roses wreathed with pearls.

"Now, nurse," said she, "come to my side,
Thou wont so glad to be;
Oh, weep not thus behind my chair;
My benison bide with thee!

"Tell me once more, before I leave
My pleasant home for aye,

The last words that my mother spake,
On death-bed when she lay.

" Come, talk about my sisters dear;
We all played at thy knee;
We all were dear, and thou wast kind
To all, but most to me.

" Thou hast been a mother unto me,
My blessing on thee bide!"
The old nurse kissed her lady's cheek,
And wiped her tears aside.

But now, beside the chamber stair,
The bridegroom spake again:
" Come, dearest Margaret; why so long
Delay the wedding train?"

Fair Margaret, in her wedding dress,
As pure as the virgin snow,
Was mounted upon a milk-white steed,
That proudly moved, and slow.

And slowly she rode to Our Lady's church,
With an earl on either side;
And four and twenty maidens fair,
To wait upon the bride.

There were garlands hung from tree to tree,
And flowers strewn all the way;
And people came from the country round
To gaze on the rich array.

That day there was song and revelry,
Loud mirth and noble cheer;
The next, alas! there was wail and woe,
For the bride lay on her bier.

They laid her upon her bridal bed,
Like marble, deadly pale;
With the wedding ring upon her hand,
In her long white marriage veil.

The youthful bridegroom by her knelt,
In woe none might beguile;

And, after that sad morning broke,
Was never seen to smile.

For her soul's peace he gave his lands,
His goods to the poor he gave;
And died a knight of the Holy Cross,
Beside the Jordan's wave.

Earl Walter passed both out and in,
With a firm unfaltering tread;
But his brow grew wan, his cheek grew thin,
And his eye as heavy as lead.

He met the guests, he sate at meat;
But his was a joyless hall:
The hawk was never off the perch,
The steed from out the stall.

His was a cureless grief of soul;
He slowly wore away,
Like an oak upon the rifted rock,
Long struggling with decay.

At length, when he was worn and bowed,
With grief and years grown old,
It chanced that his tale unto the king
By a noble knight was told.

The king he sent that noble knight
Unto the pope at Rome,
To humbly crave his holiness
To abrogate his doom.

The pope gave absolution good:
And this to him was read,
As in his ninetieth year he lay
Upon his dying bed.

Earl Walter raised his aged eyes,
And gave great praise to Heaven:
And by this token all men knew
That his sin had been forgiven.

1831.

BEATRICE.

A Lover's Lay.

GENTLE, happy Beatrice,
Visioned fair before me,
How can it a wonder be
That many so adore thee?

Old and young, and great and wise,
Set their love upon thee;
And, if gold thy heart could win,
Gold long since had won thee.

Social, cheerful Beatrice,
Like a plenteous river
Is the current of thy joy,
Flowing on for ever.

Many call themselves thy friends;
Thou art loved of many;
And, where'er the fair are met,
Fairest thou of any.

Pious, duteous Beatrice,
All good angels move thee;
Meek and gentle as a saint,
Most for this we love thee.

I can see thee going forth
Innocent and lowly,
Knowing not how good thou art,
Like an angel holy:

See thee at thy father's side,
In thy wondrous beauty,
Gladdening that benign old man
With cheerful love and duty.

I can see his happy smile,
As he gazes on thee;

I can feel the boundless love
That he showers upon thee.

What a happy house thou mak'st,
Singing in thy gladness
Snatches of delicious song,
Full of old love-sadness!

How I sit and hold my breath
When the air is winging,
From some far-off pleasant room,
Breathings of thy singing!

How I listen for thy foot,—
I know it, stepping airy,
On the stair or overhead,
Like a lightsome fairy!

What a happy house it is
Where thou hast thy dwelling!
There, love, joy, and kindliness
Evermore are welling.

Every one within the house
Loves to talk about thee:
What an altered place it were,
Beatrice, without thee!

I can see thee when I list,
In thy beauty shining,
Leaning from the casement ledge
Where the rose is twining.

I can see thee looking down,
The little linnet feeding;
Or, sitting quietly apart,
Some sweet volume reading.

Would I were beside thee,
The pages turning over,
I'd find some cunning word or two
That should my heart discover!

I would not heed thy laughter wild,
Laugh on, I could withstand thee;

The printed book should tell my tale,
And thou shouldst understand me.

I know thy arts, my Beatrice,
So lovely, so beguiling,
The mockery of thy merry wit,
The witchery of thy smiling.

I know thee for a siren strong,
That smites all hearts with blindness;
And I might tremble for myself,
But for thy loving-kindness.

But for the days of by-gone years,
When I was as thy brother;
Ah! we, my faithful Beatrice,
Were meant for one another.

I'll straightway up this very day,
And ask thee of thy father:
And all the blessings life can give
In wedded life we'll gather!

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE SPIRIT OF POETRY.

MEN build to thee no shrine,
Yet every holy place is filled with thee;
Dim groves and mountain-tops alike are thine,
Spirit of Poetry!
Island and ocean-peak;
Seas where the keel of ships shall never go;
Cots, palaces, and graves; whate'er can speak
Of human love or woe;

All are the shrines where thou
Broodest with power, not visible, yet strong;
Like odour from the rose, we know not how
Borne to the sense along.
Oh! spirit, which art pure,
Mighty and holy, and of God art sprung;
Which teachest to aspire and to endure,
As ne'er taught human tongue;

What art thou? A glad spirit,
Sent down, like Hope, when Eden was no more,
From the high heavenly place thou didst inherit,
An Eden to restore;
Sent down to teach as never
Taught worldly wisdom; to make known the right;
And the strong armour of sublime endeavour
To gird on for the fight.

I see whom thou hast called;
The mighty men, the chosen of the earth,
Strong minds invincible, and disenthralled,
Made freemen at their birth.
I see, on spirit-wings,
How thou hast set them high, each like a star,
More royal than the loftiest names of kings,
Mightier than conquerors are;

How hast thou cast a glory
Over the dust of him, sublimely wise,

The blind old man, with his immortal story
Of a lost Paradise;
How thou, by mountain-streams,
Met'st the poor peasant, and from passion's leaven
Refined his soul, wooing with holy themes
In Mary's voice from heaven.

'T was thou didst give the key
Of human hearts to Goethe, to unlock
Their sealed-up depths, like that old mystery
Of the wand-stricken rock.
All these I see, and more;
All crowned with glory, loftier than their race;
And, trembling, I shrink back, abashed and poor,
Unworthy of thy grace.

For what am I, that thou
Shouldst visit me in love, and give me might
To touch, like these, man's heart, his pride to bow;
Or, erring, lead him right?

Oh! dost thou visit me?
Is it thy spirit that I feel in all;
Thy light, yet brighter than the sun's, I see?
Is thine this spiritual call?

It is! it is! Though weak
And poor my spirit, thou dost condescend
Thy beauty to unveil, and with me speak
As gentle friend with friend.
With thee I walk the ways
Of daily life; and, human tears and sighs
Interpreting, so learn to love my race,
And with them sympathise.

Hence is it that all tears
Which human sorrow sheds are dear to me;
That the soul struggling with its mortal fears
Moveth me mightily.
Hence is it that the hearts
Of little children and unpractised youth

So gladden me with their unworldly arts,
Their kindness and their truth.

Hence is it that the eye
And sunken cheek of poverty so move,
Seen only by a glimpse in passing by,
My soul, to human love.
Spirit, I will not say
Thou dost not visit me; nor yet repine,
Less mighty though I be, less great than they
Whom thou hast made divine.

THE DYING SISTER.

What matters it, though spring-time
Upon the earth is glowing!
What, though a thousand tender flowers
On the garden beds are blowing!

What matters it, though pleasant birds
Among the leaves are singing;
And a myriad lives, each passing hour,
From mother-earth are springing!

What matters it! For one bright flower
Is pale, before them lying;
And one dear life, one precious life,
Is numbered with the dying.

Oh! spring may come, and spring may go;
Flowers, sunshine, cannot cheer them:

This loving heart, this bright young life,
Will be no longer near them.

Two lights there were within the house,
Like angels round them moving;
Oh! must these two be parted now,
So lovely and so loving!

No longer on the same soft couch
Their pleasant rest be taking!
No longer by each other's smiles
Be greeted at their waking!

No longer, by each other's side,
Over one book be bending!
Take thy last look, thy last embrace,
That joy, that life, is ending.

Henceforth thou wilt be all alone;
What shalt thou do, poor weeper?
Oh, human love! oh, human woe!
Is there a pang yet deeper?

Ah! yes, the eyes perceive no more;
The last dear word is spoken;
The hand returns no pressure now;
Heart, heart, thou must be broken!

Can it live on without that love
For which its pulse beat ever?
Alas, that loving, trusting hearts
Must ache, and bleed, and sever!

Child, cease thy murmuring; God is by
To unseal that mortal prison.
Mother, look up; for, like our Lord,
Thy blessed one is risen:

Raise thy bowed head, poor bruised reed;
Hope comes to the believing.
Father, be strong, be strong in faith;
The dead, the dead is living!

Even from outward things draw peace;
The long night-watch is ended:

The morning sun upriseth now
In new day-glory splendid.

So, through the night of mortal life,
Your angel one hath striven:
The eternal suns shine not so bright
As the redeemed in heaven.

To join the spirits of the just
Your chosen hath departed:
Be comforted, be comforted,
Ye bruised and broken-hearted!

BIRDS IN SUMMER.

I.

How pleasant the life of a bird must be,
Flitting about in each leafy tree;
In the leafy trees, so broad and tall,
Like a green and beautiful palace-hall,
With its airy chambers, light and boon,
That open to sun, and stars, and moon;
That open unto the bright blue sky,
And the frolicksome winds as they wander by!

II.

They have left their nests on the forest-bough,
Those homes of delight they need not now;
And the young and the old they wander out,
And traverse their green world round about:
And hark! at the top of this leafy hall,
How one to the other in love they call.

"Come up! come up!" they seem to say,
"Where the topmost twigs in the breezes sway.

III.

"Come up, come up! for the world is fair
Where the merry leaves dance in the summer air."
And the birds below give back the cry,
"We come, we come to the branches high."
How pleasant the lives of the birds must be,
Living in love in a leafy tree!
And, away through the air, what joy to go;
And to look on the green, bright earth below!

IV.

How pleasant the life of a bird must be,
Skimming about on the breezy sea,
Cresting the billows like silvery foam,
Then wheeling away to its cliff-built home!
What joy it must be to sail, upborne
By a strong, free wing, through the rosy morn;
To meet the young sun face to face,
And pierce like a shaft the boundless space;

V.

To pass through the bowers of the silver cloud;
To sing in the thunder-halls aloud;
To spread out the wings for a wild, free flight
With the upper cloud-winds,—oh, what delight!
Oh, what would I give, like a bird, to go,
Right on through the arch of the sun-lit bow,
And see how the water-drops are kissed
Into green and yellow and amethyst!

VI.

How pleasant the life of a bird must be,
Wherever it listeth there to flee;
To go, when a joyful fancy calls,
Dashing adown 'mong the waterfalls;
Then to wheel about with their mates at play,
Above and below and among the spray,
Hither and thither, with screams as wild
As the laughing mirth of a rosy child!

VII.

What joy it must be, like a living breeze,
To flutter about 'mid the flowering trees;

Lightly to soar, and to see beneath
The wastes of the blossoming purple heath,
And the yellow furze, like fields of gold,
That gladdened some fairy region old!
On mountain-tops, on the billowy sea,
On the leafy stems of the forest-tree,
How pleasant the life of a bird must be!

LYRICS OF LIFE.

I.

FATHER IS COMING.

THE clock is on the stroke of six,
The father's work is done;
Sweep up the hearth, and mend the fire,
And put the kettle on.
The wild night-wind is blowing cold,
'Tis dreary crossing o'er the wold.

He is crossing o'er the wold apace,
He is stronger than the storm;
He does not feel the cold, not he,
His heart it is so warm.
For father's heart is stout and true
As ever human bosom knew.

He makes all toil, all hardship light:
Would all men were the same!
So ready to be pleased, so kind,
So very slow to blame!
Folks need not be unkind, austere,
For love hath readier will than fear.

Nay, do not close the shutters, child;
For far along the lane
The little window looks, and he
Can see it shining plain.
I've heard him say he loves to mark
The cheerful fire-light through the dark.

And we'll do all that father likes;
His wishes are so few.
Would they were more! that every hour
Some wish of his I knew!
I'm sure it makes a happy day,
When I can please him any way.

I know he's coming by this sign,
That baby's almost wild;
See how he laughs and crows and stares—
Heaven bless the merry child!
He's father's self in face and limb,
And father's heart is strong in him.

Hark! hark! I hear his footsteps now;
He's through the garden gate.
Run, little Bess, and ope the door,
And do not let him wait.
Shout, baby, shout! and clap thy hands,
For father on the threshold stands.

II.

TRUE LOVE.

THERE are furrows on thy brow, wife,
Thy hair is thin and grey,
And the light that once was in thine eye
Hath sorrow stolen away.

Thou art no longer fair, wife,
The rose has left thy cheek,
And thy once firm and graceful form
Is wasted now and weak.

But thy heart is just as warm, wife,
As when we first were wed;
As when thy merry eye was bright,
And thy smooth cheek was red.
Ah! that is long ago, wife,
We thought not then of care;
We then were spendthrifts of our joy,
We now have none to spare.

Well, well, dost thou remember, wife,
The little child we laid,
The three-years' darling, fair and pure,
Beneath the yew-tree's shade.
The worth from life was gone, wife,
We said with foolish tongue;
But we've blessed, since then, the Chastener
Who took the child so young.

There was John, thy boast and pride, wife,
Who lived to manhood's prime—
Would God I could have died for him
Who died before his time!
There is Jane, thy second self, wife,
A thing of sin and shame;
Our poorest neighbours pity us
When they but hear her name.

Yet she's thy child and mine, wife,
I nursed her on my knee,
And the evil, woful ways she took
Were never taught by thee.
We were proud of her fair face, wife;
And I have tamely stood,
And not avenged her downfall
In her betrayer's blood.

The thought was in my mind, wife,
I cursed him to his face:
But he was rich, and I was poor;
The rich know no disgrace.

The gallows would have had me, wife;
For that I did not care:
The only thing that saved his life
Were thoughts of thy despair.

There's something in thy face, wife,
That calms my maddened brain:
Thy furrowed cheek, thy hollow eye,
Thy look of patient pain;
Thy lips that never smile, wife,
Thy bloodless cheeks and wan;
Thy form which once was beautiful,
Whose beauty now is gone;

Oh! these they tell such tales, wife,
They fill my eyes with tears.
We have borne so much together
Through these long thirty years,
That I will meekly bear, wife,
What God appointeth here;
Nor add to thy o'erflowing cup
Another bitter tear.

Let the betrayer live, wife;
Be this our only prayer,
That grief may send our prodigal
Back to the father's care.
Give me thy faithful hand, wife—
O God, who reign'st above,
We bless thee, in our misery,
For one sure solace — love!

III.

THE DYING CHILD.

My heart is very faint and low;
My thoughts, like spectres, come and go;
I feel a numbing sense of woe:
Until to-day it was not so,
I know not what this change may be.

The unseen Angel of Death.

It is my voice within, that calls;
It is my shadow, child, that falls

Upon thy spirit, and appals,
That hems thee in like dungeon walls;
My presence that o'ershadoweth thee.

Oh, mother, leave me not alone!
I am a-feared; my heart's like stone;
A dull pain cleaveth brain and bone;
I feel a pang till now unknown—
Stay with me for one little hour!
Oh! soothe me with thy low replies;
I cannot bear the children's cries;
And, when I hear their voices rise,
Impatient tears o'erflow my eyes;
My will seems not within my power.

Poor Johnny brought me flowers last night,
The blue-bell and the violet white,
Then they were pleasant to my sight;
But now they give me no delight,
And yet I crave for something still.
Reach me the merry bulfinch here,
He knows my voice; I think 't will cheer

My heart, his piping song to hear.
—Ah! I forgot that bird so dear
Was sold to pay the baker's bill.

Oh! why was Mary sent away?
I only asked that she might stay
Beside me for one little day;
I thought not to be answered nay,
Just once—I would have asked no more.
—Forgive me if I'm hard to please—
Mother, weep not! Oh, give me ease!
Raise me, and lay me on thy knees!
I know not what new pangs are these;
I never felt the like before.

It is so stifling in this room—
Can it be closer in the tomb?
I feel encompassed by a gloom.
O father, father, leave the loom,
It makes me dizzy like the mill.
Father, I feel thy hot tears fall;
If thou hast thought my patience small

Forgive me! Fain would I recall
Each hasty word — I love you all:
I will be patient, will be still.

THE UNSEEN ANGEL OF DEATH.

Be still! My pinions o'er thee spread;
A duller, heavier weight than lead
Benumbs thee, and the life hath fled.
Child, thou hast passed the portals dread,
Thou now art of the earth no more.
Arise, thy spiritual wings unfold:
Poor slave of hunger, want, and cold,
Thou now hast wealth surpassing gold,
Hast bliss no poet's tongue hath told;
Rejoice! all pain, all fear is o'er.

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IV.

JUDGMENT.

NAME her not, the guilty one,
Virtue turns aside for shame
At the mention of her name:
Very evilly hath she done.
Pity is on her misspent:
She was born of guilty kin,
Her life's course hath guilty been;
Never unto school she went,
And whate'er she learned was sin;
Let her die!

She was nurtured for her fate;
Beautiful she was, and vain;
Like a child of sinful Cain,
She was born a reprobate.
Lives like hers the world defile;
Plead not for her, let her die
As the child of infamy,

Ignorant and poor and vile,
Plague-spot in the public eye;
Let her die!

The Heart of the Outcast.

I am young, alas! so young;
And the world has been my foe;
And by hardship, wrong, and woe,
Hath my bleeding heart been stung.
There was none, O God! to teach me
What was wrong and what was right.
I have sinned before thy sight;
Let my cry of anguish reach thee,
Piercing through the glooms of night,
God of love!

Man is cruel, and doth smother
Tender mercy in his breast;
Lays fresh burdens on the oppressed;
Pities not an erring brother,

Pities not the stormy throes
Of the soul despair hath riven,
Nor the brain to madness driven.
No one but the sinner knows
What it means to be forgiven,
God of love!

Therefore will I put my trust
In thy mercy: and I cleave
To that love which can forgive;
To that judgment which is just;
Which can pity all my weakness;
Which hath seen the life-long strife
Of passions fiercer than the knife;
Known the desolating bleakness
Of my desert path through life,
God of love!

I must perish in my youth;
And had I been better taught,
And did virtue as it ought,
And had grey-haired wisdom ruth,

I should not have fallen so low.
'Tis the power of circumstance,
'Tis the wretch's dire mischance,
To be born to sin and woe.
Pity thou my ignorance,
God of love!

V.

A SUNDAY.

Our six days' toil is over:
This is the day of rest;
The bee hums in the clover,
The lark springs from her nest.
The old thatch, grey and mossy,
With golden stonecrop gleams;
The pigeon, sleek and glossy,
Basks in the morning beams.
All living things are cheery
Upon this Sabbath morn;

The blackbird cannot weary
Of singing on the thorn;
The sheep within the meadow
Like driven snow they look;
The cows stand in the shadow,
Within the willowy brook.
'T is like that famous picture
Which came from London down:
You must go and see that picture
When next you 're in the town.
And then there's that engraving
I told you of last spring:
—I've been these six months saving,
To buy that lovely thing.
Well, both of them resemble
This view at early day,
When diamond dew-drops tremble
Upon the dog-rose spray:
In both there is the river,
The church-spire, and the mill;
The aspens seem to shiver;
The cloud floats o'er the hill.

As soon as breakfast's over
We'll forth this merry morn,
Among the fragrant clover,
And through the summer corn:
In the great church of Nature,
Where God himself is priest,
We'll join each joyful creature,
Flower, insect, bird, and beast.
The birds praise God in singing
Among the leafy sprays,
And a loving heart is worship,
A joyful soul is praise.
Dear wife, this day of seven,
God's gift to toil, shall be
A little bit of heaven
On earth for thee and me.
'Tis I the babe will carry,
My youngest, darling boy;
And Bess and little Harry,
They will be wild with joy:
For them the wild rose mingles
With woodbine on the bough,

And birds in leafy dingles
Shout welcomes to them now.
Sweet wife, make haste: down yonder,
Down by the miller's farm,
Through old field-paths we'll wander,
Thy hand within my arm.
For Sunday leisure heeding,
The books I've brought are these,
The very books for reading
Beneath the summer trees.
They're by that brave young poet
Who wrote of Locksley Hall;
That charming verse — you know it —
You saw it first of all.
And 'neath the lime trees shady,
Among the summer corn,
I'll read of Burleigh's lady,
A village maiden born.
Haste, haste, and get thee ready,
The morn is wearing on;
The woodland lawns are shady;
The dew dries; let's be gone!

THE BARLEY-MOWERS' SONG.

BARLEY-MOWERS here we stand,
One, two, three, a steady band;
True of heart and strong of limb,
Ready in our harvest-trim;
All arow, with spirits blithe,
Now we whet the bended scythe.
Rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink-a-tink!

Side by side now, bending low,
Down the swaths of barley go;
Stroke by stroke, as true as chime
Of the bells we keep in time:
Then we whet the ringing scythe,
Standing 'mid the barley lithe.
Rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink-a-tink!

After labour cometh ease;
Sitting now beneath the trees,

Round we send the barley-wine,
Life-infusing, clear and fine;
Then refreshed, alert and blithe,
Rise we all, and whet the scythe.
Rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink-a-tink!

Barley-mowers must be true,
Keeping still the end in view;
One with all, and all with one,
Working on till set of sun;
Bending all with spirits blithe,
Whetting all at once the scythe.
Rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink-a-tink!

Day and night, and night and day,
Time, the mower, will not stay:
We may hear him in our path
By the falling barley-swath;
While we sing with spirits blithe,
We may hear his ringing scythe.
Rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink-a-tink!

Time the mower cuts down all,
High and low, and great and small:
Fear him not, for we will grow
Ready like the field we mow;
Like the bending barley lithe,
Ready for Time's whetted scythe.
Rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink-a-tink!

MOUNTAIN CHILDREN.

Dwellers by lake and hill,
Merry companions of the bird and bee,
Go gladly forth and drink of joy your fill,
With unconstrainëd step and spirit free.

No crowd impedes your way,
No city wall proscribes your further bounds,
Where the wild flocks can wander, ye may stray
The long day through, 'mid summer sights and sounds.

The sunshine and the flowers,
And the old trees that cast a solemn shade;
The pleasant evening, the fresh dewy hours,
And the green hills whereon your fathers played;

The grey and ancient peaks,
Round which the silent clouds hang day and night;

And the low voice of water, as it makes,
Like a glad creature, murmurings of delight:

These are your joys. Go forth,
Give your hearts up unto their mighty power;
For in his spirit God has clothed the earth,
And speaks in love from every tree and flower.

The voice of hidden rills
Its quiet way into your spirits finds;
And awfully the everlasting hills
Address you in their many-tonëd winds.

Ye sit upon the earth
Twining its flowers, and shouting, full of glee;
And a pure mighty influence, 'mid your mirth,
Moulds your unconscious spirits silently.

Hence is it that the lands
Of storm and mountain have the noblest sons;
Whom the world reverences, the patriot bands,
Were of the hills like you, ye little ones!

Children of pleasant song
Are taught within the mountain solitudes;
For hoary legends to your wilds belong,
And yours are haunts where inspiration broods.

Then go forth: earth and sky
To you are tributary; joys are spread
Profusely, like the summer flowers that lie
In the green path, beneath your gamesome tread.

THE MOTHER AND THE ANGELS.

At that sweet hour of even
When nightingales awake,
Low bending o'er her first-born son
An anxious mother spake.

"Thou child of prayer and blessing,
Would that my soul could know
Whate'er the unending future holds
For thee, of joy or woe!

"Thy life, will it be gladness,
A sunny path of flowers;
Or strife with sorrow, dark as death,
A coil of wintry hours?

"Oh child of love and blessing,
Fair blossom on life's tree,

My spirit trembles but to think
What time may make of thee.

"Yet, of the unveiled future,
Would knowledge might be given!"
And voices of the unseen ones
Made answer back from heaven.

First Voice.

Tears he must shed unnumbered;
And he must strive with care,
As strives in war the armëd man;
Must human suffering bear;

Must learn that joy is mockery;
That man doth mask his heart;
Must prove the trusted faithless;
Must see the loved depart;

Must find his hopes deceitful;
Must weep when none can see,
Then lock his grief, like treasure, up,
For lack of sympathy;

Must prove all human knowledge
A burden, a deceit;
And many a flattering friendship find
A paltry, hollow cheat.

Well mayst thou weep, fond mother;
For what can life bequeath
But tears and pangs unnumbered,
But watching, change and death?

SECOND VOICE.

Rejoice, rejoice, fond mother,
That thou hast given birth
To this immortal being,
To this sweet thing of earth:

For ocean's unsunned treasure,
Or gold within the mine,
Has not a thousandth part the worth
Of this fair child of thine.

Praise God both night and morning,
Be thine a joyful heart;

The child for whom thy tears are shed
Hath with the Eternal part.

And what is human sorrow?
The dew upon the earth
That boweth down the flower awhile
To call its odour forth.

Oh! do not weep, fond mother;
Look up with joyful eyes;
For a boundless wealth of love and power
In that young spirit lies:

Love, to enfold all natures
In one benign embrace;
Power, to diffuse a blessing wide
Upon the human race.

The stars shall dim their brightness,
And as a parchëd scroll
The world shall fade, but ne'er shall fade
The deathless human soul.

THE RICH AND THE POOR.

Go, child, and take them meat and drink,
And see that they be fed:
Alas, it is a cruel thing
The lack of daily bread!

Then come that I may speak with thee
Of things severely true;
Love thou the poor, for Jesus Christ,
He was a poor man too.

They told me, when I was a child,
I was of English birth;
They called a free-born Englishman
The noblest man on earth.

My home was in a pleasant place,
In England's history known;
And pride in being English-born
Still with my growth had grown.

I thought all rich men good, the poor
Content with life's award;
I thought each church throughout the land
A temple of the Lord.

I saw the high-born and the poor
Low bending side by side,
And the meek bishop's holy hands
Diffuse a blessing wide:

And round and round the sacred pile,
My reverent fancy went,
Till God and good King George at once
Within my heart were blent.

These were my days of innocence,
Of ignorance and mirth;

When my wild heart leapt up in joy
Of my pure English birth.

Oh! England, mother England,
Proud nurse of thriving men,
I've learned to look on many things
With other eyes since then.

I've learnëd divers lessons;
Have seen and heard and thought;
And oftentimes the truest lore
By human woe was taught.

Thus, on a day I saw a man,
An old man bent and hoar,
And he broke flints upon the road
With labour long and sore.

The day, it was a day in June,
The nightingales sung loud,
And with their loads of snowy bloom
The hawthorn branches bowed.

The highway side was bright with flowers;
The leafy oak-trees wove,
Above me and the brooding bird,
A peaceful, green alcove.

The earth, the air, the sun-lit sky,
Of gladness they were full;
My heart rejoiced; just then I heard
Laborious sounds and dull.

They were the old man's hammer strokes,
That fell upon the stone,
Stroke after stroke, with bootless aim;
Yet he kept striving on.

I watched him: coach and chariot bright
Rolled past him at full speed,
Horsemen and peasants went along;
And yet he took no heed.

Stroke after stroke, the hammer fell
Upon the self-same stone;

A child had been as strong as he;
Yet he kept toiling on.

Before him lay a heap of flints,
Hard flints not yet begun,
His day's work, 'mid the singing birds
And 'neath the joyous sun.

I watched him still; and still he toiled
Upon the self-same stone,
Nor ever raised his head to me,
But still kept toiling on.

"My friend," said I, "your task is hard,
And bootless seems your labour;
The strokes you give go here and there,
A waste of power, good neighbour."

Upon his tool he propped himself,
And turned toward me his eye,
Yet did not raise his head the while;
Then slowly made reply:

" The parish metes me out my work,
Twelve pence my daily fee;
I 'm weak, God knows, and I am old,
Fourscore my age and three.

" Five weeks I could not strike a stroke;
The parish helped me then;
Now, I must pay them back the cost;
Hard times for aged men.

" I have been palsied, agued, racked
With pains enough to kill;
I cannot lift my head, and yet
I must keep working still,
For I 've the parish loan to pay;
Yet I am weak and ill."

Then slowly lifting up his tool,
The minute strokes went on;
I left him, as I found him first,
At work upon that stone.

The nightingales sang loudly out;
Joy through all nature ran;
But my very soul was sick, to think
On this poor Englishman.

Again: it was the young spring time,
When natural hearts o'erflow
With love to breathe the genial air,
To see the wild flowers blow.

Anear a populous town, I walked
In meadows green and fair;
And, as I sauntered slowly on,
A little child came there.

A child she was of ten years old,
Yet with no mirth of mien;
With sunken eyes and thin pale face,
And body small and lean.

Yet walked she on among the flowers,
For all her pallid hue;

And gathered them with eager hands,
As merry children do.

Poor child! the tears were in my eyes,
Her thin small hands to see
Grasping the healthy flowers that looked
More full of life than she.

"You take delight in flowers," I said,
And looked into her face:
"No wonder; they 're so beautiful!
Dwell you anear this place?"

"No," said the child: "within the town
I live; but here I run
Just for a flower, at dinner time,
And just to feel the sun.

"For oh! the factory is so hot,
And so doth daze my brain;
I just run here to breathe the air,
And then run back again.

"And now the fields are fresh and green,
I cannot help but stay,
And get for Tommy's garden-plot
These pretty flowers to-day."

"And Tommy, who is he?" I asked.
"My brother," she replied.
"The engine-wheels they broke his arms,
And sorely hurt his side:

"He'll be a cripple all his days.
For him these flowers I got:
He has a garden in the yard,
The neighbours harm it not;
The drunken blacksmith strides across
Poor Tommy's garden plot."

As thus we talked we neared the town,
When, like a heavy knell,
Amid the jarring sounds was heard
A distant factory bell.

The child she made a sudden pause,
Like one who could not move;
Then threw poor Tommy's flowers away,
For fear had mastered love:

And with unnatural speed she ran
Down alleys dense and warm;
A frightened toiling thing of care,
Amid the toiling swarm.

Her scattered flowers lay in the street,
To wither in the sun,
Or to be crushed by passing feet;
They were of worth to none.
The factory-bell had cut down joy,
And still kept ringing on.

Proud was I, when I was a child,
To be of English birth;
For I surely thought the English-born
Had not a care on earth.

That was my creed when I was young,
It is my creed no more;
For I know, woe's me! the difference now
Betwixt the rich and poor.

THE ASCENT OF THE SPIRIT.

MOURNING ON EARTH.

She lay down in her poverty,
Toil-stricken, though so young;
And words of human sorrow
Fell trembling from her tongue.

There were palace-homes around her;
And pomp and pride swept by
The poor deserted chamber,
Where she lay down to die.

She lay down in her poverty,
Toil-stricken, though so young;
And words of human anguish
Fell trembling from her tongue.

" Oh Lord! thick clouds of darkness
About my soul are spread,
And the waters of affliction
Have gathered o'er my head;

" My life has been a desert
Whose cheering springs are dry,
A weary, barren wilderness:
Yet it is hard to die.

" For love, the clinging, deathless,
Is with my life entwined,
And the feeble spirit doth rebel
To leave the loved behind.

" Dear Saviour, who didst drain the dregs
Of human woe and pain,
In this, the fiercest trial-hour,
My doubting soul sustain!

" I sink! I sink! support me!
Deep waters round me roll.

I fear! I faint! Oh Saviour,
Sustain my sinking soul!

REJOICING IN HEAVEN.

YOUNG spirit, freed from bondage,
Rejoice! Thy work is done;
The weary world is 'neath thy feet;
Thou, brighter than the sun.

Arise! Put on the garments
Which the redeemëd win.
Now, sorrow hath no part in thee,
Thou, sanctified from sin.

Awake, and breathe the living air
Of our celestial clime!
Awake to love which knows no change,
Thou, who hast done with time!

Awake! Lift up thy joyful eyes,
See, all heaven's host appears;

And be thou glad exceedingly,
Thou, who hast done with tears.

Awake! ascend! Thou art not now
With those of mortal birth;
The living God hath touched thy lips,
Thou, who hast done with earth.

FAR-OFF VISIONS.

STEEPED in fresh dews and rosy light,
A land was opened to my sight
In the sweet hour 'twixt day and night.
A light, not of the sun, was there;
A breeze, but not of common air;
A joy that circled everywhere.
The land had hills, not bare and rent,
But each imparadised ascent
Rose green up to heaven's firmament;
And trees that cast impervious shade:
Yet all was fresh and undecayed,
As they could neither die nor fade.
The waters of that land were clear
As its serenest atmosphere;
Their flow was music to the ear:
And all around the air was stirred
With the sweet song of many a bird
Whose voice I ne'er before had heard.

And in the mountain's golden sheen,
And in the distant valleys green,
Fair, shining companies were seen.
I saw each separate face from far,
A beauty which no time could mar,
Beaming serenely, like a star.
They neared me, and my heart beat high
As those strange, lovely forms drew nigh:
They saw me not, and passed me by.
Some passed on with deliberate feet,
Together, rapt in converse sweet,
As friends who from long partings meet.
Some bounded on in joyful madness,
So full of youth and life and gladness:
What could they know of pain or sadness?
Some slowly wandered through the wood,
As they some pleasant quest pursued,
And these were nearest where I stood.

Concealed from them within that place,
I gazed upon them face to face;
I marvelled at their wondrous grace.

Their faces beamed with love and ruth;
Their speech was full of earnest truth,
Of wisdom with the warmth of youth.
And while I gazed my soul was wrought
Into the urgency of thought;
I spoke the words my feelings brought.

"Oh beings pure and blest and bright!"
Exclaimed my spirit in delight,
"How have I panted for your sight!
Ye are my kindred; well I know
The bonds of soul that make us so;
Let me go with you where ye go.
The toil of earth is hard and vain;
There strive we heights and depths to gain,
And are withheld as by a chain.
There man is mean, suspicious, cold;
There crafty villany is bold;
There nothing is esteemed but gold.
Oh! I am weary of the strife,
The selfish, sordid ways of life,
Where only evil schemes are rife.

My strift hath ever been for good;
I have pressed onward unsubdued,
Though disappointment hath ensued.
But this is hard: and weak and low
The ever-striving heart must grow,
Which no requited hope doth know;
And mine is faint: but now I see
My kindred in your spirits free,
In your pure natures. Let me be
One of your joyful company!"
My spirit-words were all too faint,
Or bore too much the earthly taint
Of fear and petulant complaint.
I was unheard; no voice replied,
The woodland sounds on every side
Filled all the air with concord wide.
None turned on me his ardent gaze,
None looked in sorrow or amaze,
But threaded still the wooded ways.
I turned me round and wept for pain,
To think no audience I could gain,
To think that I had pled in vain.

Again, with tear-half-blinded eyes,
I turned to that bright paradise,
And saw two forms of beauteous guise.
The sight at once my woe dispelled;
The one was old whom I beheld,
His strength was crowned by age, not quelled.
The beauty of a life well-spent,
A nobler boast than long descent,
Was his majestic ornament.
By him a woman sate, benign;
A creature of such grace divine
As man alone describes by sign;
Of perfect form, angelic face,
The visible type of inward grace
Which nothing outward can efface.
No sculptor's art or poet's dream
Made their divinest woman seem
So worthy of the soul's esteem,
As was the woman whom I viewed
Beside the old man in the wood,
Tender and pure and nobly good,
A vision fair of womanhood.

They spake: like balm their words were sent
Into my heart; my soul intent
Listened their lofty argument.
Their converse was on themes sublime,
Themes worthy of immortal rhyme,
Solving the mysteries of time.
Light dawned within my soul, as still
They spoke of life, of good and ill,
Of man and the Eternal Will.

I heard them tell why guilt so long
Goes unrebuked: why crime is strong;
And right yields trembling to the wrong:
Why still the weak and poor must bear
Through life an unrequited share
Of toil and hardship and despair:
Why wealth begetteth wealth: why they,
Who have from others take away:
Why power goes forth to crush and slay.
And then I heard the old man cast
His memory backward through the past,
Which was to him a treasury vast.

I heard him tell how he had borne
For seventy years the rich man's scorn,
Fresh toil beginning every morn.
His toil had won him daily bread,
And ofttimes he was scantly fed,
And had not where to lay his head.
A bruised heart was his, a mind
That as a pinioned eagle pined,
Seeking for what it could not find.
His life it was a trial stern;
A school wherein he had to learn
'Mid evil what to good should turn.

By this I knew those creatures bright
Were the redeemëd heirs of light.
My soul rose into day from night:
For these I saw so greatly blest
Had been on earth the poor oppressed.
I saw that toil shall yet have rest;
I saw that tears have joy in store:
I said, I will repine no more,
But trust as never heretofore.

A LIFE.

PART I.

MORNING PRAYER.

Mother and child in their chamber.

OUR dear ones are torn from us; one by one
The golden links of our soul's love are severed;
And 'mid the quicksands and the shoals of life
The heavy billows of adversity
Cast us forlorn and naked. It is well,
For God hath stricken us. Still, from the depths
Of our great desolation goeth up,
Like his, the frail disciple on the sea,
Our feeble cry: "Lord, help us or we perish!"

Yet, though thou chastenest me, I flee unto thee,
And put my trust in thee, and at thy feet
Lay down my precious things; nor would I murmur

Though thy good Providence saw meet to strip me
Even of the one dear blessing thou hast left.
And, for thou yet art merciful, my soul
Shall not withhold aught from thee. Oh! my Father,
Accept mine offering: this one poor lamb
I dedicate to thee in life or death;
Accept thou him; thou hast mine other treasures!

Boy, clasp thy hands, and raise thy heart to God;
And here, before him, in the face of day,
Here, in the chamber of our poverty,
With our sore desolation round about us,
I dedicate thy life and all thy powers
To him and his great human family.
Father! behold thy child; and what in him
Comes short of thy requirings, give him further.
Give him true courage: not such as makes men
Stand, sword in hand, to meet their enemy;
But such as nerved the Saviour to drive forth
The traders from the Temple; as sustained him
'Mid the revilers in the outer court,
When, crowned with thorns, he answered not again.

Give him persuasive speech: not with bland lies
To win the ear of courts, or to take captive
The hearts of women, but with eloquent words
To lure men's souls to virtue; to make felt
How beautiful is love, and to instil
The spirit of love, even like a holy essence,
Where'er his presence comes. Oh! gracious Father,
That this poor child of mine might be thy herald
Among mankind! to the lorn prisoner,
Within the hopeless dungeon, carrying knowledge
Better than life, light better than the day;
That to the judge upon the high tribunal
He might impart mercy and charity!
Oh! let him sit by death beds, and in homes
Made desolate, and with the faint in heart,
And the poor weary sinner! Let him compass
Both land and sea to speak peace to the mourner!

Father, I ask not wealth, nor length of days,
But bread to eat and raiment to put on,
And that thou wilt support me to make fit
This child for thy great works.

PART II.

THE LAST HOUR.

The interior of a poor dwelling.

Woman.

SPEAK low, methinks he sleeps. I smoothed his pillow
Scarce fifteen minutes past, and he since then
Hath hardly moved.

Man.

Sleeps he? He will do well;
God grant he sleep till eve!

Child.

I will not stir;
But I will lay me down upon the hearth
And sleep too, lest I wake him. But think you
That really he will die?

Man.

Come life or death,
All will be well with him. I heard last eve

More than I knew before, though we so long
Have known him and the holy life he led.
'T was he, who like an angel stood between
The living and the dead, when raged the plague
I' th' city; it was he, who in the war-time
Lived in the hospital among the wounded,
Tending them with the kindness of a woman,
And comforting and cheering them in death.

Woman.

God's blessing on him!

Man.

He was one time sent for,
When or wherefore I know not, to the court;
And lands were offered him and place and wealth,
So he would sell himself to do their will,
Which was for evil.

Woman.

That would he not.
Gold could not bribe him to an evil deed.

Man.

Yet he was poor, and had an aged mother
Dependent on him, but they could not buy him.
He loved, he said, far more his peace of mind
Than lands or wealth; and that the favour of God
Was higher than that of kings.

Woman.

'T was a brave man!

Man.

Brave! thou shouldst hear old Nathan talk of him.
Nathan and his grand children were in bed
When flames burst forth, and all the house was fire,
For 't was a gusty night. The neighbours stood
In panic terror, wildly looking on;
And, though poor Nathan and the little children
Cried out for help, none dared to rescue them:
When suddenly that young man, hurrying forward,
Without reproaching those whom fear made cowards,
Seized on a ladder, rushed into the chamber,
And, amid raging fire, brought forth the inmates,

As if his life were nothing unto theirs.
Ay, thou shouldst hear old Nathan speak of him.

Woman.

The deed was like him: thus he ever did;
His life was a self-sacrifice. Those whom
The world looked coldly on, and, with hard judgment,
Spurned from its presence as a thing unholy,
He sought out, pitying their blind ignorance,
—Harsh was he unto no one but himself;—
And first he taught them to respect themselves,
And then with goodness lured them on to virtue.
He hated sin, but the poor outcast sinner
Was still his human brother. This was goodness,
And this was greatness too; but, to my thinking,
It does not show such strength of innate virtue
As that refusal of the offered wealth,
Seeing he was poor, and had an aged mother
Dependent on him, loving so that mother.
Why, most men would have snatched the gold in triumph,
Smoothing the prize on 't to an easy conscience.

Man.

He was not of their sort.

Woman.

But I must to him.

How calm he lies with parted smiling lips!

—Oh God, thou hast ta'en thine own!

Man.

Ah! is he dead?

Yes, this is death; sleep ne'er was calm like this.

But what an angel's face it is in death!

Woman.

He's with his mother now, a saint in heaven.

Man.

Well mayst thou weep, nor can I keep back tears.

THE FAËRY OATH.

" THY voice is weak, thine eyes are dim,"
The holy father said to him;
" The damp of death is on thy brow,
Whate'er thy sin, confess it now,
Confess it, ere it be too late.
Is it blood, or pride, or restless hate?"

" I have shed no blood," he thus replied,
" I have hated none, I have known no pride,
Yet have sinned as few men sin beside.
I have bound myself, by oath and spell,
To the faëry people of field and fell,
With solemn rites and mysteries.
Can the church absolve from sins like these?"

" My son," said the friar, " tell to me
How such enchantment fell on thee.

Thou must have sold thyself to sin,
Ere such enchantment power could win."

The sick man lay on the greensward low,
But he raised himself, and his words were slow:

" I dwelt as the minstrel dwells at best,
The thymy wold was my couch of rest;
I watched on the ancient mountains grey,
I dwelt in the greenwood day by day;
I knew each bird that singeth free;
I had knowledge of each herb and tree;
I called each little star by name;
I watched the lightning's subtle flame;
I was learnëd in the skies and seas,
And earth's profoundest mysteries:
But best I loved, in the moonlight glade,
To be where the faëry people played;
And to list their music sweet and low,
Too soft for joy, too wild for woe;
And I tuned my harp, both even and morn,
To the witching airs of the faëry horn,

Till I knew them all, and at will could bring
The revellers wild from their grassy ring.
Then I sate with them at a banquet spread,
I drank their wine that was ruby red,
And a deadly sleep came o'er my brain:
But, when I opened my eyes again,
I was not beneath any earthly tree;
A heavy darkness hung o'er me.
I lay in a couch-like chariot wide,
And one who drove me sate beside:
I heard him urge the horses fleet;
I heard the sound of their ceaseless feet.
On they went, o'er the rugged road,
For days and days, with their easy load:
Swiftly we sped, and the passing air
Was cool on my cheek and lifted my hair.
On we went over mountains high,
And roaring waters we journeyed by,
And through thick woods where the air was cold,
O'er sandy wastes and the furzy wold,
Day after day, as it seemed to me,
In a gloom, like the night of eternity.

At length I sate in another land,
With the faëry people on either hand.
Where was that land I cannot say:
Its light was not like the light of day;
The air was not like the air of earth;
'T was the wondrous land where dreams have birth.
There were marvellous things of shape divine;
There were fountains that poured forth purple wine;
There were trees that bent with their golden load
Of fruits, that all gifts of mind bestowed;
The very air did breathe and sigh,
As if o'erburdened with melody.
But then there were frightful creeping things;
The coil of the adder, the harpy's wings,
The screech of the owl, the death-bed moan,
And eyes that would turn the blood to stone.
I was set to the feast, and half in dread
I drank of the cup, and I ate the bread;
I was told to bathe, and half in fear
I bathed myself in those waters clear:
I ate, I drank, I bathed, and then
I could no longer have part with men.

I dwelt 'mid the faëries, their merry king;
I danced on the earth, in the charmëd ring;
I learned the songs of awful mirth
That were made ere man abode on earth,
In the time of chaos, stern and grey,
'Mid the ruins of old worlds passed away.

A careless joyful life I led
Till thrice seven years, as a day, had sped;
Then a longing wish was in my mind
To dwell once more among my kind:
So up I rose, but I told to none
What journey I was departing on;
And at the close of a summer's day
I laid me down on the flowery brae.

Ere long came one, and a friar was he,
Muttering over his rosary:
He was lean and crabbed and old;
His voice was thick, and his prayers were cold;
He moved not my heart. Then came there by
A fair child, chasing a butterfly:

'T was a lovely boy, with his free, bright hair,
Like a sunny cloud, o'er his shoulders bare;
And, as he danced in his glee along,
He filled the air with a joyful song.
I blessed the child, from my inmost heart,
With a faëry gift that could ne'er depart.
Next came a maiden, all alone,
And down she sate on a mossy stone:
Fair was she as the morning's smile;
But her serious eye had a tear the while.
Then she raised to heaven her thoughtful look,
And drew from her bosom a claspëd book.
Page by page of that book she read;
Hour by hour I listenëd.
Still on she read sedate and low,
And at every word I was wrung with woe;
For she taught what I ne'er had known before,
The holy truths of the Christian lore.
And I saw the sinful life I led,
And my human heart was shook with dread;
And I, who had lived in pleasures wild,
Now wept in awe, like a stricken child.

Down I knelt, and I strove to pray,
But never a hope to my soul found way;
For with that spell I was bound and bound,
And with elvish snares was compassed round:
But a prayer was ever on my tongue,
For soon I learned that prayers were strong
To unweave the webs that were in my track
To win my soul to the faëry back.
I have wrestled hard, I have vainly striven
'Gainst them, and for my peace with Heaven;
But now my strength doth ebb apace.
"Father, can the Church award me grace,
And among the blessed a dwelling-place?"

"My son," the reverend friar spake,
"Behold how the faëry webs shall break.
Thou hast fought the fight, thou hast battled long,
And the victor here is not the strong;
But the gates of heaven stand open wide,
And the contrite heart is the sanctified.
Give up; stand, like the Hebrews, still,
And behold the wonders of God's will.

Lay down thy strife, lay down thy pride,
Lay all thy hope on Christ who died,
And thou art saved; for, at his spell,
Not faëry webs, but the gates of hell
Are dashed aside like the morning's mist.
Oh, vainly might fay or fiend resist!
Have faith; 'tis the spell of glory, given
To burst all bars on the way to heaven.
Have faith, have heaven, my son!"

There ran
A sudden joy through the dying man;
And the holy father bent his knee,
Chanting "Te laudamus, Domine!"

VILLAGE CHILDREN.

Like the wild birds on the trees,
Like the wingëd autumn breeze,
Like whate'er has life and gladness,
Unallied to thought and sadness,
Are ye, children blithe and boon,
Shouting to the harvest-moon;
And your joy, like waters free,
Bubbles forth perpetually.
Nought ye heed that ye must toil,
Sons and daughters of the soil;
That within this quiet place
Ye must run your simple race,
Never know the stir and strife
Of a loftier, nobler life;
That your bones, where ye have played,
By your fathers' shall be laid.

Nought ye care for learning vain,
Which but dulleth pulse and brain:
Ye are neither deep nor wise;
Ye shall ne'er philosophise.
Lowly ones, *that* matters not,
Doth not gloom your humble lot,
Doth not make one ray depart
From the sunshine of your heart.

Happy children! here ye run
Gaily in the summer's sun;
'Neath this village tree ye play;
Down these shadowy lanes ye stray
Gathering flowers, or singing wild
To some younger laughing child.
'Tis a kindly life ye lead;
Such as poet hath decreed
To that earlier, happy time,
Ere the earth was gloomed by crime.

Simple ones, and full of gladness,
Ye shall school my spirit's sadness.

Never-ending joy ye find
In your own contented mind;
Sending not your spirits out
Searching wearily about
For ideal things, that lie
Nowhere underneath the sky.
I, like you, will find delight
On the left hand and the right,
Nor o'erlook the treasure sweet
Which is lying at my feet.

Children, though untaught ye be,
Thus ye shall be guides to me.

THE SEA FOWLER.

THE baron hath the landward park, the fisher hath the sea;
But the rocky haunts of the sea-fowl belong alone to me.

The baron hunts the running deer, the fisher nets the brine;
But every bird that builds a nest on ocean-cliffs is mine.

Come on then, Jock and Alick, let's to the sea-rocks bold:
I was trained to take the sea-fowl ere I was five years old.

The wild sea roars, and lashes the granite crags below;
And round the misty islets the loud strong tempests blow.

And let them blow! Roar wind and wave, they shall not me dismay;
I've faced the eagle in her nest and snatched her young away.

The eagle shall not build her nest, proud bird although she be,
Nor yet the strong-winged cormorant, without the leave of me.

The eider-duck has laid her eggs, the tern doth hatch her young,
And the merry gull screams o'er her brood; but all to me belong.

Away, then, in the daylight, and back again ere eve;
The eagle could not rear her young, unless I gave her leave.

The baron hath the landward park, the fisher hath the sea;
But the rocky haunts of the sea-fowl belong alone to me.

THE FISHING-BOAT.

GOING OUT.

Briskly blows the evening gale,
Fresh and free it blows;
Blessings on the fishing-boat,
How merrily she goes!
Christ he loved the fishermen;
Walking by the sea,
How he blessed the fishing-boats
Down in Galilee!
Dark the night, and wild the wave,
Christ the boat is keeping;
Trust in him, and have no fear,
Though he seemeth sleeping.

COMING IN.

Briskly blows the morning breeze,
  Fresh and strong it blows;
Blessings on the fishing-boat,
  How steadily she goes!
Christ he loved the fishermen;
  And he blessed the net
Which the hopeless fishers threw
  In Genesaret.
He has blessed our going out,
  Blessed too our returning;
Given us laden nets at night,
  And fair wind in the morning.

THE PREACHER'S STORY.

MINE is no idle legend of romance,
No flowery tale of knights and chivalrie,
Of love-lorn damsel, or of elfin dance
Held in the moonlight 'neath some haunted tree;
Nor fabled marvels of the far-off sea:
Such lighter themes I leave to younger men;
Ill would it suit an ancient man like me,
Whose days are verging to fourscore and ten,
On light and trivial tale toemploy my feeble pen.

Fain would I, from my long experience,
Teach you what well beseemeth all to know:
How good it is to trust in Providence,
Who clothes the lilies in their vests of snow,
And from his high heaven sees our want and woe,
Counts every tear, and hears each secret sigh;
Who bids the floods of righteous vengeance flow,

Yet bounds their devastation. Even I
Have seen his love displayed, and of it testify.

Bonds unto death my pious fathers knew,
For conscience' sake: the might of bigot power,
Even on their hearths and at their altars, slew,
As a fierce Moloch greedy to devour.
How strong the weak in persecution's hour,
Who put their trust in God! Fair women stood
Like the mailed champion in his vantage tower;
And tender little ones, through fire and blood,
Maintained their holy faith, pure martyrs unsubdued.

God saw his little band in their distress,
And heard their cry rise from the prison cell;
For them he oped the pathless wilderness,
And led them from captivity, to dwell
In a broad land of summer rest, where fell
On them no bigot fury, no behest
Of king or priest their conscience to compel.
No! in the wide free forests of the West
Fearless they worshipped God as they believed it best.

Hemmed by the mountains and the forests round,
Beside the margin of a mighty lake,
How quiet was the heritage they found!
How tranquilly each morning did they wake!
How tranquilly, when day was done, betake
Themselves to rest! and on the genial air
What holy sounds of psalmody did break
Forth from the silence of the forest, where
Those humble people met for fervent praise and prayer!

They laid their dead beneath the spreading trees,
Making the place about them holy ground.
Years passed: the men grew old, and on their knees
Seated their children's children, and the sound
Of prosperous human life rang gaily round.
No storms had been within their homes of peace;
God's blessing went with them; and they had found,
In flocks, and herds, and stores, a vast increase;
In daughters and in sons, as though the blessing would not cease.

I was among the children of those sires.
The forest in its beauty was our own;

And the wild creatures, and the woodland quires,
To us were as familiar playmates known;
And every flower by liberal nature sown
We gathered in our sylvan revelry:
For gladness, as a robe, was o'er us thrown;
And our grey fathers 'neath some forest tree
Sate in their pleasant rest, as joyfully as we.

More joyfully; for their tried hearts could measure
Their rest by knowledge all unknown to ours.
Alas! upon that dream of summer pleasure
Broke whirlwind rumours of contending powers;
A quick alarm ran through those sylvan bowers,
With the wild tumult of approaching war;
And in the deep hush of the midnight hours
The dismal war-whoop sounded from afar,
Rousing the slumberers up with its unearthly jar.

And then, with morning's light we sadly traced
Where those wild dwellers of the woods had gone;
Behind them lay a black and smoking waste,
As carrying fire and terror they went on.

Then passed the hostile army; and anon
Our flocks and herds were driven from the stall,
The harvests of our summer trampled down;
And we were left in penury, stripped of all;
Yet dreading worse distress and terror to befall.

Trouble on trouble came, and woe on woe,
And famine triumphed o'er our sylvan town;
No more the hunters to the woods could go;
For the fierce Indian ranging up and down,
Or skulking 'neath the dark low boughs, had done
His work of death so frequently and well,
That often of the hunter bands not one
Returned unto the desolate town, to tell
How hopeless was their quest, or where their brethren fell.

The winter came. Oh, sorrowful to see!
No longer food within the frozen lake,
Nor corn, nor fruits, nor venison store had we,
Nor refuge was there whither to betake
Ourselves from wasting want; and famine spake

Appalling truths in hale men's feebleness;
But it was saddest, when the child did make
Piteous appeal, to dole forth less and less
Of miserable food, a mockery of distress.

One Sabbath night, one Christmas Sabbath night,
When the bright stars looked from the frosty sky,
And all around the silent earth was white
With the crisp snow, which all untracked did lie,
A blank expanse 'neath Heaven's eternal eye,
We met, as was our wont, for prayer and praise,
Beneath the roof which in long years gone by
Our fathers in the wilderness did raise,
That they might serve the Lord who had redeemed their days.

My years were few: I was a thoughtless child,
Thoughtless till then; but ne'er shall I forget
That solemn time. My hoary sire, a mild,
Strong-hearted man; I can recall him yet;
He was our minister, and there he met
His little flock, a pale dejected band.
He stood amid them, and his cheeks were wet

With sorrow which his strength could ill withstand,
And love, that o'er his soul had absolute command.

He prayed, and he exhorted all to hope,
And put in God undoubting confidence;
He culled from Holy Writ the glorious scope
Of mercy, miracle, and providence,
Proving how faith 'gainst woe is sure defence.
He told of Israel, through the desert led,
Eating of food that came they knew not whence;
And the seven thousand on the mountain fed,
In humble, holy faith, by Christ, the Living Bread.

Strong were his words, mighty and eloquent,
Unlike the usual tenor of his speech;
And to all hearts a clear conviction w en
That God spoke through him, graciously to reach
Their drooping spirits, to console, to teach
How He the fountain of all good would be.
Thus did the Apostles to the churches preach.
All bowed, that blessed night, the trembling knee,
Knowing that God could save, and praying fervently.

Oh, marvel of God's love! The morning light
Put doubt and misbelieving fear to shame;
For, from the forest, in the silent night,
Herds of the wild-deer trooping onward came
Into our empty folds, as come the tame
Flocks from the pasture. To the very door
Those shy, wild creatures, which all art disclaim,
Came a free sacrifice, a living store
Sent by their God and ours, that we might want no more.

Pity it seemed those gentle beasts to slay:
But hunger hath no mercies; and so great
Had been our want, that on their easy prey
They fell and slew, and, thankfully elate,
They and their famished households freely ate.
There was no longer want, no longer fear,
All saw that God, in love compassionate,
Had in their sorest need vouchsafed to hear,
And given unto their prayers food to sustain and cheer.

From that day forth all vain and idle thought,
All cold and sinful doubt, I put aside;

I felt that a strong power within me wrought,
Which changed my foolish heart and purified;
God's power I saw, which could not be belied;
His arm outstretched, as in the ancient day;
Therefore, abasing all unholy pride,
I vowed to be his minister alway,
And preach to all His love, which hath no stint nor stay.

THE GOLDEN AGE.

They had a lovely dream of old,
Of a pure age, an Age of Gold,
Wherein they neither bought nor sold:
A reign of bliss, ere care was known,
Or sin the seed of death had sown;
Ere human hearts had ached in sorrow,
Or human eyes had shed a tear;
Ere men grew careful for the morrow,
Or pined in hope, or drooped in fear;
Ere trusting faith had felt a blight,
Or love had aught to hide or shun;
Ere the day's thought, from morn to night,
Was but to keep what it had won;
Or the night's rest was broken from pain
Of weary count of loss and gain;
When all was kind and fair and pure,
And love and joy, like truth, were sure.

Oh, Age of Gold! wert thou a vision
By some enthusiast poet seen?
The unveiling of the land Elysian,
Where death has never been?
The foretaste of a happier lot,
The prelude of a state to be,
To show that this dim earth was not
The home of man's nativity?
For what the aspiring soul desired,
And traced in its excursive flight,
Was truth in fancy's garb attired,
The shadowing forth of its delight,
A glimpse of glory infinite;
The dawning of a perfect day,
Which prophet bards had long foretold,
When sin and woe should pass away,
And bring once more the Age of Gold.

Nay, leave these speculative themes,
Leave to the poet his sweet dreams,
And I will show thee a delicious page
Of living poetry, the real Golden Age.

A brighter, gladder Age of Gold, in sooth,
Than poets feigned, the Golden Age of Youth.

Oh, Youth! thou hast a wealth beyond
What careful men do spend their souls to gain:
A trustful heart, that knows not to despond;
A joy unmixed with pain.
A world of beauty lies within thy ken;
Another paradise becomes thy lot;
Thou walk'st amid the ways of toiling men,
And yet thou knowest it not.
Thou thinkëst not to plot and circumvent;
Thou dost not calculate from morn till eve;
They speak of guile, thou know'st not what is meant;
Of broken faith, thou canst not it conceive.

Oh, happy Golden Age! thy limbs are strong,
Thou boundest like the fawn amid its play;
Thy speech is as the melody of song;
Thy pulse like waters on their cheerful way;
Beauty enrobes thee as a garment's fold;
And, as a spring within thy heart's recess,

Wells up, more precious than the sands of gold,
Thy own great happiness.

Oh, beautiful and bright! That thou mightst keep
The kindness of thy soul as it is now!
That o'er thy heart no selfish chill might creep!
No sorrow dim thy brow!
That thou mightst gather up life's flowers,
Love, joy, and meditative hours,
And twine them as an amaranthine wreath
Around thy brows in death!
My daughter! my own life! to thee I turn,
And with a warm solicitude do yearn
Toward thee, in thy unpractised innocence,
And pour my longings out in fervent prayer:
God be thy blessing, thy assured defence,
Thy Comforter, thy Father, everywhere!

DEATH.

THE flower-strewn earth is wondrous fair,
But Death, the strong, is everywhere.
It matters not how bright, how still,
Is valley green, or cloud-capped hill,
Death, like a hard unpitying foe,
Is there to strike the certain blow.
Thus, yesterday, to-day, to-morrow,
Till time is done, shall be this sorrow.
Thus is it in all distant climes;
Thus was it in the ancient times.
The prophets are of former days;
All those whom we delight to praise;
The bard, whose soul was love and light;
The arm that combated for right;
The patriot-king; the wise, the brave;
All, all, are mouldering in the grave.

The gain was thine when rose on high
The Egyptian mothers' midnight cry;
When God's strong angel, with a blast
Which smote, among the Assyrians passed;
When the unnumbered Persians lay
On Salamis at break of day;
And when, 'mid revelry, came down
Darkness on the Italian town:
Then Death, thou hadst the victory.

Oh, Death! oh, spoiler, stern and strong!
The sea, the isles, to thee belong.
The hoary hills are all thine own,
With the grey cairn and cromlech-stone;
The groves of oak, the woods of pine,
The sunless ocean-caves are thine.
Thy ancient slumbers lie beneath
The untilled verdure of the heath;
The merchant meets thee 'mid his gold,
The hunter on the breezy wold;
The seaman finds no unknown bay,
But there thou lurkest for thy prey.

Thou spoiler of life's charm! thou cold
Defacer of time's purest gold!
Where is the spot to thee unknown?
The whole wide world by thee is sown,
And years must pass in misery steeped,
Ere that dread harvest shall be reaped.

Yet, conqueror of conquerors stern!
Yet, deaf despoiler! who dost spurn
All prayers, all tears; thou yet must bow
Unto a mightier than thou.
Long in thy night was man forlorn,
Long didst thou laugh his hopes to scorn;
Vain were philosophy's faint dreams,
Their light was but as meteor gleams;
Till rose the conqueror of Death,
The humble man of Nazareth;
He stood between us and despair;
He bore, and gave us strength to bear;
The mysteries of the grave unsealed,
And our high destiny revealed.

Nor bard, nor sage, may comprehend
The heaven of rest to which we tend.
Our home is not this mortal clime;
Our life hath not its bounds in time;
And death is but the cloud that lies
Between our souls and paradise!

Oh, Death! well might each thoughtful race
Give thee the high and holy place;
Earth's loveliest scenes are meet for thee,
Thou portal of Eternity!

SPRING CROCUSES.

Not to cold-hearted, weary care
  Give up thy heart, a votary won;
Come now, a simple pleasure seize,
Where a thousand thousand crocuses
  Are shining in the sun.

I have seen them oft, and loved them long,
  Comparing them, in wild vagary,
To some enchanted lake that lies
Beneath the bright, enchanted skies,
  In the old land of faëry.

But why need we comparisons,
  They are themselves so beautiful:
Are they not flowers, dear English flowers,
Growing in meadows that are ours,
  For any child to pull?

And from the dim and treeless town
The little children have gone forth,
Running and leaping, happy bands,
With little baskets in their hands,
And hearts brimful of mirth.

And, darkly pondering on the past,
Slowly have come down aged men,
Feeble with years, and bent and hoar,
To gaze upon the flowers once more;
Never to gaze again.

Here come the children of the poor,
Leaving their early cares behind,
Gamesome as the wild forest herd,
And free as is the mountain bird,
Or as the mountain wind.

Some like strong lambs at play; and some
Culling of choicest flowers a few;

And some, like gleaners, bending low,
Keep gathering in a steady row,
And never have enow.

The little infant 'mong the grass
Sits, meekly thinking to itself;
Until comes out a gaudy fly,
Or a small bee goes humming by,
Then shouts the merry elf.

Ay, sing unto the lark above ye,
And freely wander where ye list;
And glean up, from the abounding earth,
Strong joy and rosy health and mirth;
Good gifts too often missed:

For carelessly ye wander now;
But passing life brings deepening shadows,
And ye, in some far burning clime,
May oft retrace the youthful time
Spent in your native meadows.

And God sent flowers to beautify
The earth, and cheer man's careful mood;
And he is happiest who has power
To gather wisdom from a flower,
And wake his heart in every hour
To wholesome gratitude.

THE LOST ONE.

We meet around the board, thou art not there;
Over our household joys hath passed a gloom;
Beside the fire we see thy empty chair,
And miss thy sweet voice in the silent room.
What hopeless longings after thee arise!
Even for the touch of thy small hand I pine;
And for the sound of thy dear little feet.
Alas! tears dim mine eyes,
Meeting in every place some joy of thine,
Or when fair children pass me in the street.

Beauty was on thy cheek; and thou didst seem
A privileged being, chartered from decay;
And thy free spirit, like a mountain stream
That hath no ebb, kept on its cheerful way.

Thy laugh was like the inspiring breath of spring,
That thrills the heart, and cannot be unfelt.
The sun, the moon, the green leaves and the flowers,
And every living thing,
Were a strong joy to thee; thy spirit dwelt
Gladly in life, rejoicing in its powers.

Oh! what had death to do with one like thee,
Thou young and loving one; whose soul did cling,
Even as the ivy clings unto the tree,
To those that loved thee? Thou, whose tears would spring
Dreading a short day's absence, didst thou go
Alone into the future world unseen,
Solving each awful untried mystery,
The dread unknown to know;
To be where mortal traveller hath not been,
Whence welcome tidings cannot come from thee?

My happy boy! and murmur I that death
Over thy young and buoyant frame had power?
In yon bright land love never perisheth,
Hope may not mock, nor grief the heart devour.

The beautiful are round thee; thou dost keep
Within the Eternal Presence; and no more
Mayst death, or pain, or separation, dread:
Thy bright eyes cannot weep,
Nor they with whom thou art thy loss deplore;
For ye are of the living, not the dead.

Thou dweller with the unseen, who hast explored
The immense unknown; thou to whom death and heaven
Are mysteries no more; whose soul is stored
With knowledge for which man hath vainly striven;
Beloved child, oh! when shall I lie down
With thee beneath fair trees that cannot fade?
When from the immortal rivers quench my thirst?
Life's journey speedeth on;
Yet for a little while we walk in shade;
Anon, by death the cloud is all dispersed;
Then o'er the hills of heaven the eternal day doth burst.

TRANSLATIONS.

THE

SORROW OF THE GERMAN WEAVER BOY

In the Mountains of Silesia.

BY FERDINAND FINLIGRATH.

" GREEN grow the budding blackberry hedges;
What joy! a violet meets my quest;
The blackbird seeks the last year's sedges,
The merry chaffinch builds her nest;
The snow has from each vale receded,
It only clothes the mountain's brow.
I from my home have stolen unheeded;
This is the place; I'll venture now:
Rübezahl!

" Hears he my call? I'll boldly face him:
He is not bad. Upon this stone
My pack of linen I will place him;
It is a right good, heavy one,
And fine: yes, I'll uphold it ever,
I' th' dale no better's wove at all.
He shows himself to mortal never;
So courage, heart! once more I call:
Rübezahl!

" No sound! Adown the wood I hasted,
That he might help us, hard bested.
My mother's face, so wan and wasted;
Within the house no crumb of bread.
To market, cursing, went my father;
Might he but there a buyer meet!
With Rübezahl I'll venture rather;
Him for the third time I entreat:
Rübezahl!

" For he so kindly helped a many,
My grandmother oft to me has told;

Yes, gave poor folks a good luck-penny,
Whose woe was undeserved, of old.
So here I am: my heart beats lightly,
My goods are justly measured all,
I will not beg, will sell uprightly.
Oh, that he *would* come! Rübezahl!
Rübezahl!

"Suppose these goods should suit his taste,
And he should order more to come;
We could his wish fulfil with haste,
We've plenty more as fine at home.
Suppose he took them, every piece;
Ah! would his choice on them might fall!
What's pawned I would myself release:
That would be glorious! Rübezahl!
Rübezahl!

"I'd enter then our small room gaily,
And cry, 'Here, father's gold in store!'
He would not curse; that he wove daily
A hunger-web, would say no more.

Then, then again would smile my mother,
And serve a plenteous meal to all;
Then would rejoice each little brother —
Oh, that he *would* come! Rübezahl!
Rübezahl!"

Thus spake the little weaver lonely,
Thus stood and cried he, weak and pale.
In vain; the casual raven only
Flew o'er the old gnome-haunted dale.
Thus stood he while the hours passed slowly,
Till the night-shadows dimmed the glen,
And with white quivering lips said lowly,
Amid his tears, yet once again,
"Rübezahl!"

Then, softly from the greenwood turning,
He trembled, sighed, took up his pack,
And to the unassuagëd mourning
Of his poor home went slowly back.
Oft paused he by the way, heart-aching,
Feeble, and by his burden bowed.

Methinks the famished father's making
For that poor youth, even now, a shroud.
Rübezahl!

Rübezahl, familiar to English readers as Number-nip, had his haunts among the Riesen-Gebirge in Silesia, and was the especial friend and patron of the poor. The Legend of Rübezahl is one of the most touching and beautiful of the German popular stories.

REQUIESCAT.

BY FERDINAND FINLIGRATH.

WHOE'ER the ponderous hammer wields;
Whoe'er compels the earth to flourish;
Or reaps the golden harvest fields,
A wife and little ones to nourish;
Whoever guides the laden bark;
Or, where the mazy wheels are turning,
Toils at the loom till after dark,
Food for his white-haired children earning;

To him be honour and renown!
Honour to handicraft and tillage;
To every sweat-drop falling down
In crowded mills or lonesome village!

All honour to the plodding swain
Who holds the plough! Be't too awarded
To him who toils with soul and brain,
And starves! Pass him not unregarded:

Whether, in chambers close and small,
'Mid musty tomes he fancy smothers;
Or, of the trade the bondaged thrall,
He dramas writes and songs for others;
Or whether he, for wretched pay,
Translate the trash which he despises;
Or, learning's serf, puts, day by day,
Dunce-corps through classic exercises.

He, also, is a prey to care.
To him 'tis said, "Starve thou or borrow."
Gray grows betimes his raven hair,
And to the grave pursues him sorrow.
With hard compulsion and with need,
He, like the rest, must strive untiring;
And his young children's cry for bread
Maims his free spirit's glad aspiring.

Ah! such a one to me was known.
With heavenward aim his course ascended;
Yet, deep in dust and darkness prone,
Care, sordid care, his life attended.
An exile, and with bleeding breast,
He groaned in his severest trial;
Want goaded him to long unrest,
And scourged to bitterest self-denial.

Thus, heart-sick, wrote he line on line,
With hollow cheek and eye of sadness;
Whilst hyacinth and leafy vine
Were fluttering in the morning's gladness.
The throstle sung, and nightingale,
The soaring lark hymned joy unending,
Whilst thought's day-labourer, worn and pale,
Over his weary book was bending.

Yet, though his heart sent forth a cry,
Still strove he for the great ideal;
"For this," said he, "is poesy,
And human life this fierce ordeal."

And, when his courage left him quite,
One thought kept hope his heart alive in;
"I have preserved my honour bright,
And for my dear ones I am striving."

At length his spirit was subdued;
The power to combat and endeavour
Was gone, and his heroic mood
Came only fitfully, like fever.
The Muses' kiss, sometimes, at night
Would set his pulses wildly beating;
And his high soul soared towards the light,
When night from morning was retreating.

He long has lain the turf beneath,
The wild winds through the grass are sighing;
No stone is there, no mourning wreath,
To mark the spot where he is lying.
Their faces swoln with weeping, forth
His wife and children went,—God save them!
Young paupers, heirs to nought on earth,
Save the pure name their father gave them.

To toil all honour and renown!
Honour to handicraft and tillage;
To every sweat-drop falling down
In crowded mills and lonely village!
All honour to the plodding swain
That holds the plough! Be it too awarded
To him who works with soul and brain,
And starves! Pass him not unregarded.

THE JOINER'S APPRENTICES.

First.

'Tis a shuddering work, 'tis a work of dread;
Between the boards shall be laid the dead.

Second.

How now! What makes thy tears run fast?
Child of the stranger, a weak heart thou hast.

First.

Nay, do not so quickly grow angry, I pray;
I ne'er made a coffin, in truth, till to-day.

Second.

Be it first time, or last time, now pledge me in wine;
Then to work; and never let faint heart be thine.

First cut up the boards as the length may decide,
Then plane the curling-up shavings aside.

Board unto board next mortise them tight,
Then polish the narrow bed black and bright.

Next, the varnish-perfumëd coffin within,
Lay the down-fallen shavings so white and thin;

For, on shavings must slumber the perishing clay:
With all undertakers 'tis ever the way.

Then carry the coffin to th' house of grief;
Corpse within, lid screwed down, and the work is brief.

First.

I cut the boards; and, with accurate ell,
Above and below I have measured it well.

I plane the rough boards so smooth; but yet
My arm is weak, and my eye is wet.

I mortise the boards above and below;
Yet my heart is full, and my heart is woe.

'Tis a shuddering work, and a work of dread;
For between the boards must be laid the dead.

THE PILGRIMAGE TO KEVLAAR.

FROM HEINRICH HEINE.

I.

THE mother stood at the window,
The son he lay in bed:
"Here's a procession, Wilhelm;
Wilt not look out?" she said.

"I am so ill, my mother,
In the world I have no part;
I think upon dead Gretchen,
And a death-pang rends my heart."

"Rise up, we will to Kevlaar;
Will book and rosary take:

God's Mother there will cure thee,
Thy sick heart whole will make."

The Church's banner fluttered,
The Church's hymns arose,
And unto fair Cöln city
The long procession goes.

The mother joined the pilgrims;
Her sick son leadeth she;
And both sing, in the chorus,
Gelobt seyst du, Marie!

II.

The Holy Mother, in Kevlaar,
To-day is well arrayed;
To-day hath much to busy her,
For many sick ask her aid.

And many sick people bring her
Such offerings as are meet;

Many waxen limbs they bring her,
Many waxen hands and feet.

And who a wax hand bringeth,
His hand is healed that day;
And who a wax foot bringeth,
With sound feet goes away.

Many went there on crutches,
Who now on the rope can spring;
Many play now on the viol,
Whose hands could not touch a string.

The mother she took a waxen light,
And shaped therefrom a heart.
"Take that to the Mother of Christ," she said;
"And she will heal thy smart."

He sighed and took the waxen heart,
And went to the church in woe;
The tears from his eyes fell streaming,
The words from his heart came low.

" Thou that art highly blessëd,
Thou Mother of Christ!" said he;
" Thou who art Queen of Heaven!
I bring my griefs to thee.

" I dwell in Cöln with my mother,
In Cöln upon the Rhine,
Where so many hundred chapels
And so many churches shine;

" And near unto us dwelt Gretchen,
But dead is Gretchen now.
Marie, I bring a waxen heart:
My heart's despair heal thou!

" Heal thou my sore heart-sickness,
So will I sing to thee,
Early and late, with fervent love,
Gelobt seyst du, Marie!"

III.

THE sick son and the mother
In one chamber slept that night,
And the Holy Mother of Jesus
Glid in with footsteps light.

She bowed her over the sick man's bed,
And one fair hand did lay
Upon his throbbing bosom;
Then smiled, and passed away.

It seemed a dream to the mother;
And she had yet seen more,
But that her sleep was broken,
For the dogs howled at the door.

Upon his bed extended
Her son lay, and was dead;
And o'er his thin pale visage streamed
The morning's lovely red.

Her hands the mother folded,
Yet not a tear wept she;
But sang, in low devotion,
Gelobt ſeyſt du, Marie!

THE END.

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